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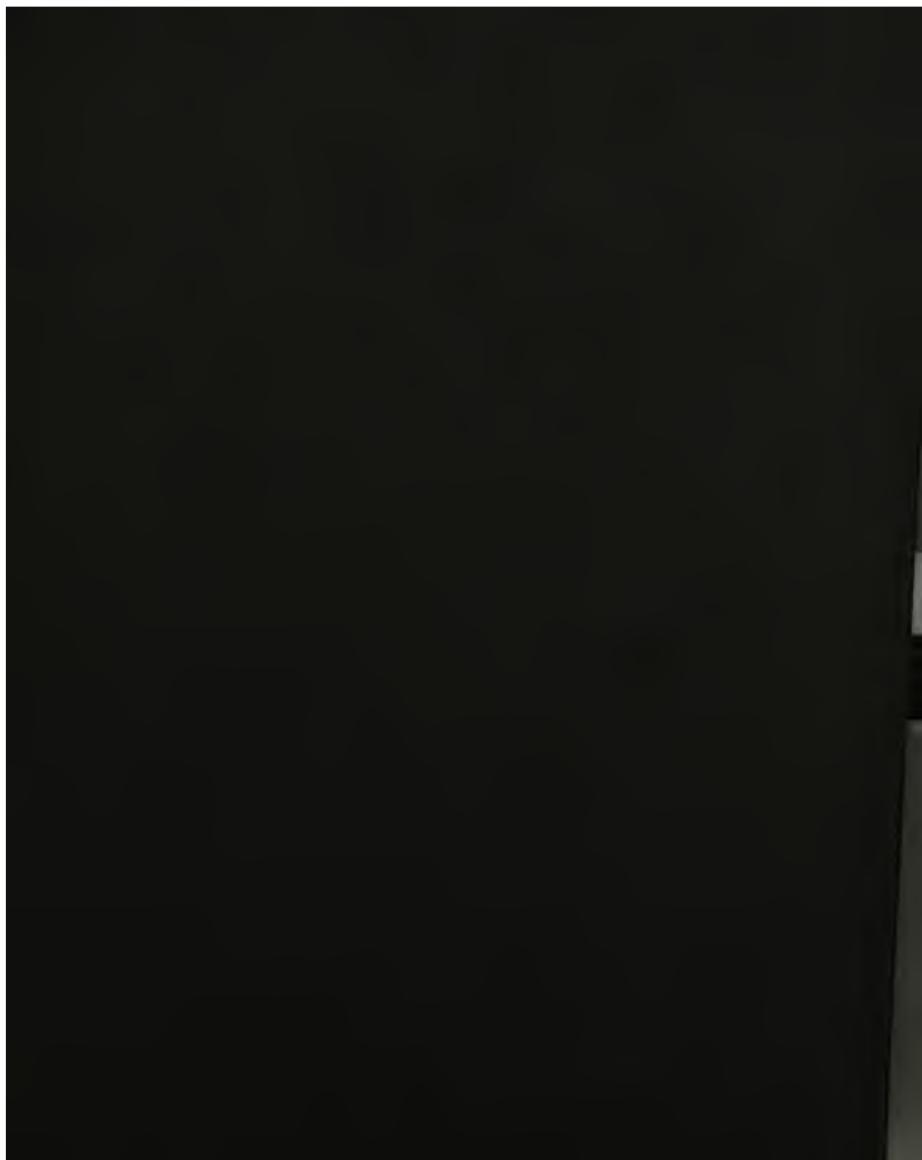
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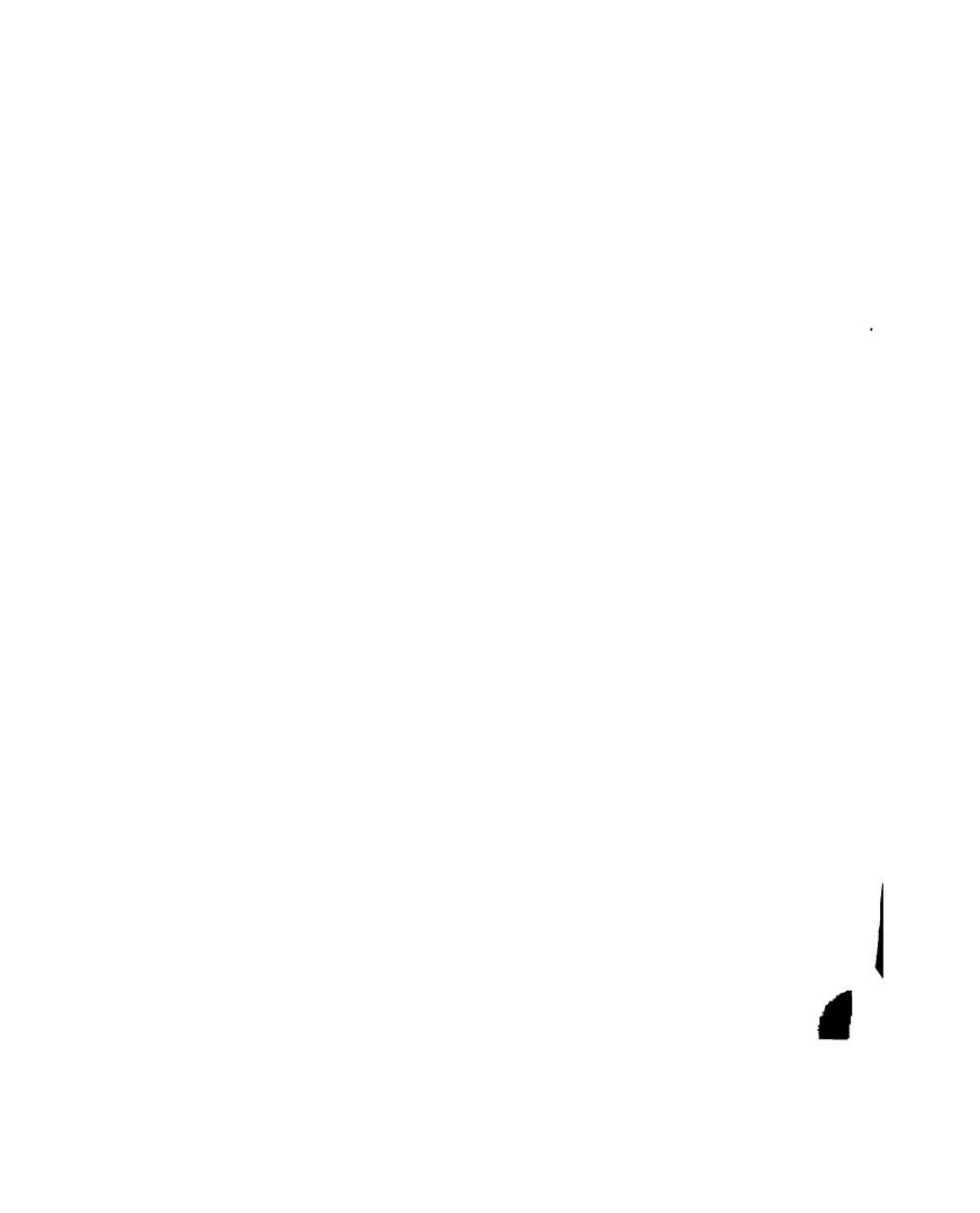
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# The Lay of the Last Angler:

OR,

A TRIBUTE TO THE TWEED

AT

MELROSE

AT THE END OF THE SEASON OF 1867.

BY

A SEXAGENARIAN.

K E L S O :

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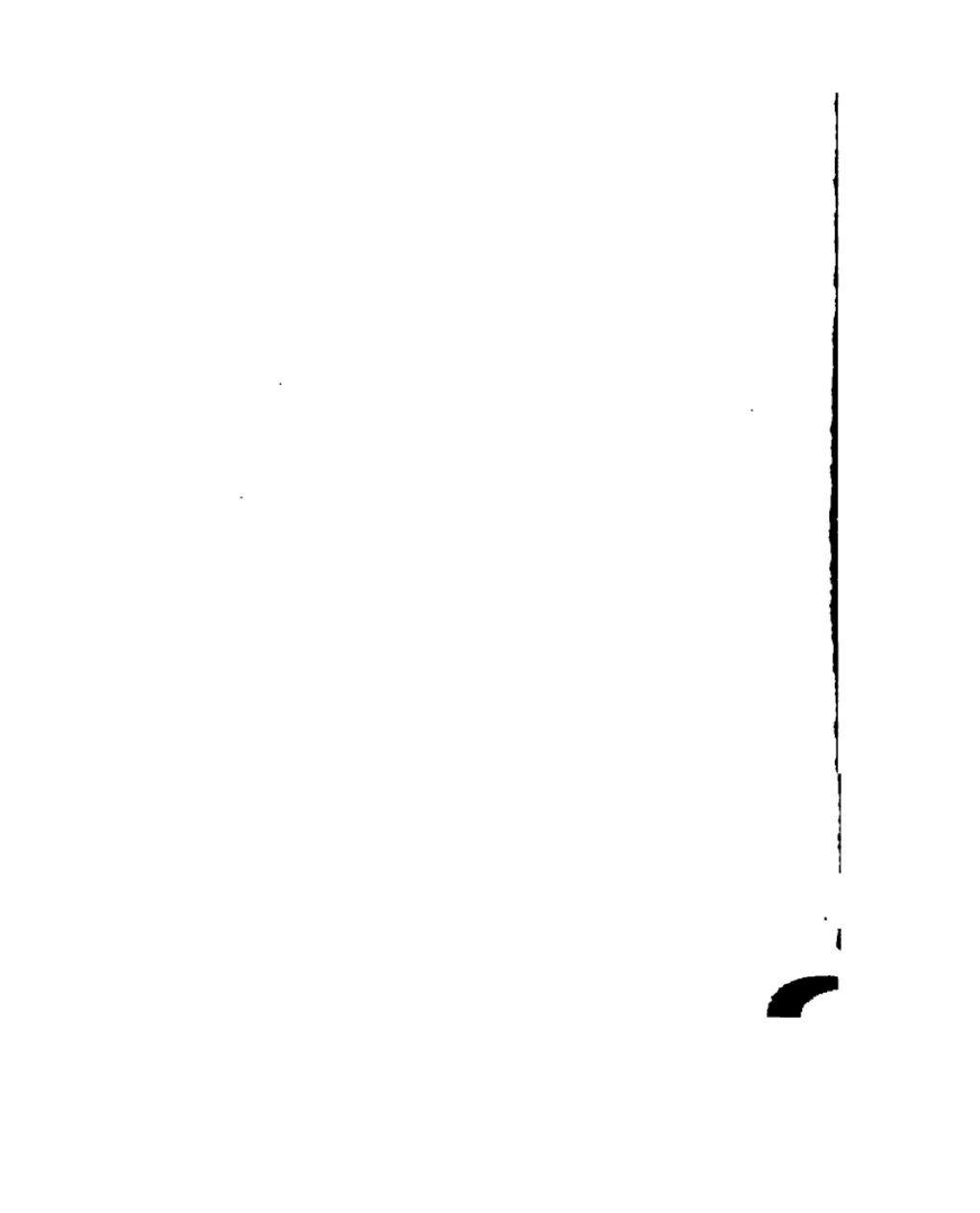
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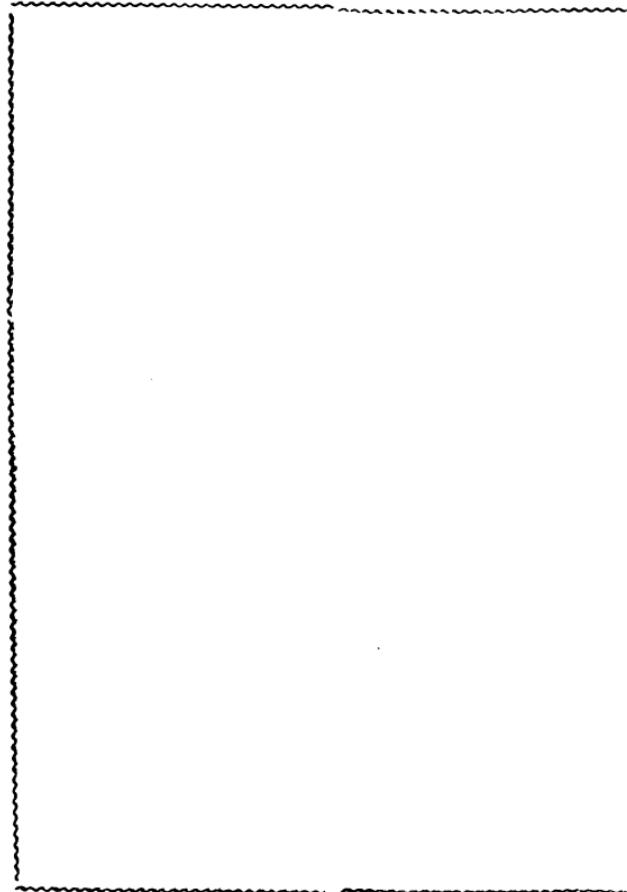
1867.

REPRINTED 1871 AND 1886.

286 f . c. : .







## “THE LAY OF THE LAST ANGLER.”

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OME, quill of swan, or goose or hen,  
Or anything that makes a pen ;  
Come, ink and blotting-book and paper,  
With sealing-wax and vesta taper,  
And envelope of usual size  
To hide my thoughts from curious eyes ;  
Lend me your aid, for want of better,  
To write a comic sort of letter  
To friends with whom I've been this dear month,  
Colonel and Mrs. Alick Learmonth—  
If they won't think their guest a silly 'un  
For eulogizing their Pavilion—

Not what was built by George the Fourth,  
But one far better, in the north,  
Where Tweed majestically flows  
'Twixt Abbotsford and fair Melrose.  
And as old bards invoked the Muse  
Their thoughts with poetry to infuse,  
So I'd appeal in kindred manner  
To the Ephesian dame, Diana—  
'Tis true she never did aspire  
To sing in verse or strike the lyre ;  
Clio, Euterpe, or Apollo  
At music would have beat her hollow :—  
Still, to reject her would be treason,  
For which I'll give sufficient reason :  
She was the deity, I presume,  
Presiding o'er my sleeping room,  
For she was painted, nymphs and all,  
In an old picture on the wall.  
I can't forget the sight so recent,  
'Twas classical, but not quite decent ;

Yet Art won't look at things in my sense—  
It claims what's called poetic license.  
Mind, I deny these claims pretentious ;  
Such license often is licentious.  
The posture of Diana's good,  
But, to say truth, she's almost nude.  
As for her nymphs, they're having fun  
With absolutely nothing on ;  
And nymphs are naughty, if they roam  
Abroad, yet leave their clothes at home !  
Merry they are, and full of laughter,  
I daren't say what tricks they're after :  
Enough of this queer scene I've sung,  
'Twere better now to hold my tongue.  
I only fear, if I refuse  
To invoke Diana as my muse,  
Or if, not meaning to be rude,  
Upon her bathing I intrude,  
That she her hounds may set poor me on,  
And tear me up like young Actæon.

Besides, she had a taste for sporting,  
Save when Endymion she was courting ;  
Nimble she was, and fleet of foot,  
And skilful both to hunt and shoot ;  
Her fishing I don't know about,  
Either for salmon or for trout ;  
I scarcely think those fish are found  
In Greece, or such-like classic ground :  
It's not a case involving mystery,  
But a mere fact of natural history.

And now, methinks, I've said enough  
About Diana and such stuff ;  
So I'll commence a plain narration  
Of my late fishing emigration—  
An “outing” I shall long remember  
At the beginning of November.

One night, when all things were quiescent,  
I left my house in Wilton Crescent,  
And booked myself a first-class fare  
To go by mail from Euston Square.

You'll say I was a lucky elf  
To get a carriage to myself ;  
For when the guard had locked the door  
I laid the cushions on the floor,  
And with some things beneath my head  
I lay as flat as in a bed,  
Quite comfortable, warm, and snug,  
With plaid, and cloak, and railway rug ;  
And so I rested many a mile,  
In fact, until we reached Carlisle.  
There scarce ten minutes were allowed  
To breakfast in an awful crowd,  
While railway porters made a rout  
In shifting all the luggage out ;  
For here we left the Glasgow line  
To join the Waverley and North Tyne.  
Oh ! 'twas a lovely morn ! The sun  
Gilt the hill-tops on which it shone ;  
While all below in shadow lay  
Of neutral tint and pearly grey ;

But the low grounds with rime were white,  
For it had frozen hard at night.  
We soon arrived at Melrose station,  
Where my kind host's consideration  
Had sent his horses and his brougham  
To bring me, bag and baggage, home.  
The Colonel greets me at his gate  
With hearty welcome, but can't wait :  
He's mounted on a chestnut steed,  
Of matchless form and thorough breed,  
Which prances, eager to be gone,  
As is dear Jack, the Colonel's son,  
A beautiful and rosy lad,  
In boots and knickerbockers clad.  
He sits his pony like a man ;  
If once he's off, catch him who can !  
They're going down to Gladswold rocks  
To draw the coverts for a fox.  
The Colonel's only time to say,  
“ The river will not fish to day—

The rain last week has brought it down,  
But 'twill, we trust, be ready soon.  
Now, pray, go in : I hope you'll find  
Your room and all things to your mind :  
You've time to change your dress, and then  
They'll serve the breakfast about ten :  
That's been our usual hour of late ;  
Luncheon at two, and dine at eight."

Then I'm saluted in the hall  
By a young matron, grand and tall,  
With outstretched hand and winning grace  
Bidding me welcome to the place.  
Now, come, Diana, and inspire  
Your votary with becoming fire,  
Lest I should fail, as I intend,  
To thank my charming female friend,  
The Colonel's better half, I mean,  
Of fair Melrose the fairest queen,  
Of whom it no unmeaning boast is,  
That she's a fascinating hostess.

She's most attentive to her guests,  
Anticipating their requests ;  
But her wee chicks of tender age  
Her fondest interests engage.  
For them the loving mother lives ;  
To them her chief attention gives.  
She guides her household with the air  
Of an experienced menagère,  
Keeps everything in nice array  
Without pretension or display.  
Then I admire, I'll confess,  
Her great simplicity of dress.  
For when a woman's form and face  
Are handsome, 'tis an extra grace  
And beauty, not to be denied,  
To be devoid of beauty's pride ;  
Meekly to take what God has given,  
For what it is, a gift from heaven.  
Charms, too elaborate, are lost—  
“ When unadorned, adorned the most.”

Now, breakfast o'er, I go with speed  
To see John Purdy and the Tweed ;  
They're close at hand—a little stroll  
Across a bright and grassy knoll.  
I found old John within his cottage  
Quietly dining on some pottage—  
A symptom, between me and you,  
There's nought upon the Tweed to do.

Now, John and I are oldish friends,  
O'er forty years our time extends ;  
He's been with me for many a spurt on  
The streams and pools of bonnie Merton ;  
He's given me many a useful lesson  
How to "be cannie," or to press on  
A heavier strain against one's fish,  
And tire it out, as he would wish.  
He could get out a splendid line  
Into the wind, or "fishing fine,"  
In heavy water, when afloat,  
No one could beat him with the boat ;

In short, he's master of the art  
In all details and every part.  
If Cambridge gave degrees to anglers  
John would be first of Senior Wranglers !  
“ How are ye, John ? ” “ A'm verra weel ;  
A've just been gettin' a bit meal ;  
A'm glad tae see ye : pleese, sit doon ;  
A'm thinking ye're frae Lunnan toon.  
Hoo's a' the family, I wonder ?  
They'll be in France, or some ways thonder ? ”  
“ Well, John, and how's the water ? ” “ Eh ?  
She's risen ower five fut the day ;  
She's drummelt sair, and in a spate ;  
Ye'll no get ony feshing yet.  
There's rain up wast, forment the border ;  
She'll tak' twa days 'ore she's in order ;  
*She* wunna fesh.” Now, by the bye,  
I'd like to know the reason why  
A river's always called a *she* ?  
I own it often puzzles me.

If Tweed's a she—that is, a maid—  
It may with honesty be said  
That she's a most capricious jade.  
The patience of a Job it taxes  
When she incontinently waxes—  
That is, you think it's running in,  
And fishing will ere long begin,  
When down she comes, as if in laughter,  
And you must wait for three days after.  
You wait, and then perhaps with pain  
You witness just the same again.  
You've only got to kick your heels,  
Dawdle, make flies, or bob for eels !  
Well ! wait—as you have often waited ;  
Ere long your appetite may be sated ;  
Be patient—wait—and then at last  
The chances are you'll have a cast.  
Besides, if you don't fish, there's leisure  
With friends to take some other pleasure.

For instance, Mrs. L. proposed  
To go, before the evening closed,  
To Abbotsford, a classic spot  
Immortalised by Walter Scott.

It was in Autumn, thirty-one,  
The evening of his setting sun,  
When I'd the privilege to be  
The guest of such a man as he,  
In the *last* party which he gave  
Before he sank into his grave.  
I'll tell as well as I am able  
The persons sitting round his table.  
Sir Walter Scott, his daughter Anne,  
His soldier son, a splendid man ;  
Lockhart, his son-in-law, and wife—  
He wrote, you know, Sir Walter's Life ;  
Wordsworth the poet ; Allan, too,  
Who “The Circassian Captives” drew ;  
And Wordsworth's child, a damsel staid ;  
With nephew Charles, now Bishop made ;

And James, not he of "Naval War,"  
But pleasant author of a score  
Of novels (one just like the other) ;  
Old Lady Polwarth (late Lord's mother);  
Myself, my brother's wife, and brother.  
One day we went, like merry grigs,  
In coaches, phaetons, and gigs,  
Through stubble brown and flowery mead  
Along the sunny banks of Tweed  
Into the glen, more steep and narrow,  
Of Newark and romantic Yarrow.

It was a touching sight to see  
Those aged bards of minstrelsy  
Sauntering together, arm in arm,  
'Mid scenes with ancient mem'ries warm !  
Old Newark's towers in ruins grey  
Were emblems of their own decay ;  
Their pleasure not unmixed with pain—  
They never met on earth again !

But Wordsworth that sweet walk records  
In sonnet of his pensive words,  
The flicker of a dying flame,  
“Yarrow Revisited” is its name.  
In it, or note, he condescends  
To mention some “young giddy friends,”  
Which meant, in truth, Anne Scott and me,  
Who climbed the walls in youthful glee,  
And mounted up that hillock steep  
Which marks the castle’s ancient keep.  
But hold!—those thoughts of days gone by  
Raise an involuntary sigh.  
Where are those friends? Alas! all gone!  
Their record the sepulchral stone.  
Some names, indeed, can never die,  
But live enshrined in history.  
Yet death has struck them all but three—  
The Bishop, Ravensworth, and me.  
Excuse this little episode,  
And I’ll resume a sprightlier mood.

Well, then ! the weather's coming on,  
The glass has risen, the sun has shone ;  
The river's dark, and running still  
Swift as the sluices from a mill ;  
But I'm informed, if I go out,  
There's just a chance to raise a trout  
On the north side of “Brig-end” pool,  
Where the thin water runs more dull.  
Mind, by a trout they mean a *Bull*,  
With which, at times, the river's full.  
“A Bull ! an Irish bull !” you'll say,  
“You're surely chaffing us in play.”  
No ; I'm in earnest ; understand  
I don't mean bulls that live on land,  
But the bull-trout, which, when a chitling,  
Is better known by name of whitling.  
Though quite distinct, 'tis near a salmon—  
I'm really speaking without gammon ;  
They're strong and greedy, and I've found  
Them weighing up to eighteen pound.

I took one in “The Webbs” one day,  
After some very vigorous play,  
Which Purdy thought would be a prize  
(For salmon then was on the rise),  
But when he'd cleik'd it, with his foot  
He gave a kick, and cried out, “Hoot !  
It's but a muckle ugly troot !”  
Its market price per pound, he knew,  
Instead of *tenpence*, was but *two*.  
Well, now we're off—not John and I,  
For John is sent to Coventry !—  
I'm not alluding to the town,  
But to an angler of renown,  
Who halves the water with my friend,  
And catches salmon without end.  
It can't be helped—and, failing John,  
I'm introduced to Richardson,  
Of whom experience makes me see  
That he's a famous deputy.

He has been here for eight years past  
(I hope this year's by no means last),  
And put by Mr. Broadwood first on  
At the Pavilion from Makerston.  
Stalwart in form, of carriage bold,  
And about thirty-five years old ;  
Quiet in movement, keen of eye,  
And ever watchful of your fly ;  
He doesn't care for getting wet,  
And is first-rate with boat or net ;  
He never throws a chance away,  
But on a cast will make you stay  
If there's a prospect e'er so small  
Of raising any fish at all ;  
He's civilest and best of creatures,  
With genial smile and open features ;  
Ask him, "Shall we have sport ?" I guess  
He'll say, "Oh yass !" that is, O yes.  
I value such a humble friend,  
Who perseveres unto the end ;

I always yield me to his whim,  
For he knows me and I know him ;  
To share my luncheon him I ask,  
And serve him first from pocket flask,  
*Une petite goutte*, with "Here's more luck!"  
Gives to us each the greater pluck.  
With such, I find—it may seem funny—  
That courtesy does more than money ;  
And if you prove to henchman stout  
That you know well what you're about,  
Or if with him your simple plea is  
You're every bit as keen as he is,  
Why, then, be sure you'll stick together  
Just like a sole and upper leather.  
Now that I've helped you well to scan  
The portrait of this fisherman,  
We're fairly off—the tackle ready—  
The coble launched, secure and steady—  
The line at work, the rod as well so  
(A beauteous tool from Forrest, Kelso !)

The hour of day 'twixt three and four—  
"Hurrah! I'm on the Tweed once more!"  
"Eh! she's an awfu' heavy water!"  
(That mean's there's little chance of slaughter).  
"Ye'll please to keep your rod-point low  
To sink the flee, an' move it slow;  
She's ower thick for fesh, I fear,  
But ye mae heuk a bull-trot here;  
I see'd aye splash in there this minnit;  
Ye're verra near—next cast 'll win it."  
Hullo! what's *that*?—a check so slight  
It seemed no more than minnow's bite.  
Was that a beastie, then, I wonder?  
Another cast—the fly well under—  
A draw this time! I give a twist,  
Inexplicable, with the wrist.  
I've got him!—oh! the pleasant feel  
When home is struck the pointed steel!  
Then comes a swag—a jerking shake,  
And vain attempts the line to break;

The rod responds with fatal spring,  
There's scarce a chance for such a thing.  
A run or two—a plunge—a flounder—  
And then we've netted our six-pounder.  
'Tis little *that*, and scarce worth winning,  
But still it's always a beginning—  
A jackal goes before a lion,  
'Tis stimulus next day to try on.

So in the morn we're out again ;  
The river's "big," but no more rain ;  
The atmosphere both cool and fresh,  
And Richardson foretells "some fesh."  
The upper water's still our mark,  
Where we left off when it was dark ;  
But higher up along the shore 's  
A cast they call the Nàas\* or Nores :  
Here we begin with might and main,  
But our first trial 's all in vain ;  
For when there's so much water on  
The chances there are not begun.

\* Query, Narrows.

So next we go to "Brig-end" stream,  
Where the side-current curds like cream.  
The cast is changed—the fly the same,  
A "double toppy" is its name,  
Mixed body, tinsel, blue at shoulder,  
On largish hook, a certain holder ;  
The wing is from a turkey's tail,  
The middle dark, but both ends pale.

Now, here I'll venture just to mention  
A few good rules which need attention  
The line should be obliquely cast,  
And when across the run it's past  
Hang it at angle eighty-five  
With your rod-point—then it's alive  
To the least check—you needn't fear—  
Without endangering your gear  
You strike effectually your prey,  
Or deftly move the line away,  
That if he chance to miss the fly  
He's not afraid again to try.

But striking awkward from the shoulder,  
You've little hope of being a holder ;  
You strain your line, or splash the water,  
Creating terror in that quarter ;  
You scare the fish, or he scares *you*  
By snapping your poor line in two !  
“What wretched luck I've had,” you'll say,  
“To lose that splendid fish to-day !”  
Now, don't be angry—pray, be cool ;  
“Don't say ‘You lie,’ or call me fool.  
I'll tell you why you failed to kill ;  
It wasn't want of luck, but skill.”  
Then here's a maxim learnt of old,  
Always fish deep if water's cold ;  
And if the river runs apace  
You'll find them in a “cheeky” place ;  
The side against the rock is best,  
For there the fish can lie and rest.

Well ! “Brig-end” was to be respected,  
The fish came just where we expected ;

She took it well beneath the surface  
Without a rise, or shewing her face.  
The grip was good, the hook held fast,  
And ere six minutes quite were past  
We had her laid upon the ground,  
A “baggit” weighing eighteen pound.  
No more up there,—we change the fly,  
And next the “Quarry Stream” we try.  
There with a second we give battle ;  
A seventeen-pounder—such a rattle !  
The stream was strong—all boil and bubble,  
And so the salmon gave us trouble.  
I was delighted, for this reason,  
That John had said, in all the season  
They’d only taken one fish there ;  
So I’d looked on it with despair.  
Below John’s house we got a third,  
About twelve pound ; and then we heard  
Along the road the dog-cart roll  
To take us down to “Cowie’s Hole.”

Distant about two miles or more—  
I'd never seen the cast before,  
And a prime cast it is, no doubt,  
As I in substance soon found out.  
We didn't leave that favourite spot  
Till two more salmon we had got,  
Both sixteen pound, and each a clipper,  
The first a baggit, next a kipper.  
Now *baggit's* designated so  
From *bag* or *sac*, which holds her roe ;  
And “*kipper*” has his name from *kip*  
Or hook upon the nether lip,  
With which a male fish ploughs a “*redd*”  
Or furrow for the spawning bed.

And now we take our homeward track  
With more than two stone on our back—  
I mean by “our,” let me own,  
Not mine, but that of Richardson.  
I rest awhile—and then we dine,  
And talk of angling o'er our wine.

Speaking of wine, don't think me vicious  
If I pronounce my host's delicious—  
*Credite, amici, verbis meis!*  
It's all as generous as he is—  
The claret was a perfect treat  
I know not if it were Lafitte,  
Or Chateau Margaux, but I'll say  
"*Vin de la première qualité.*"  
As to the port, were you to try it,  
Money, you'd think, could scarcely buy it ;  
High flavoured, limpid, bright, and pure,  
You may enjoy it—yet be sure  
(Barring excess) you'll find no sorrow,  
Sickness, or headache on the morrow.

Next day my host and I went out  
To have another fishing bout.  
He took "The Whirls ;" and I began  
With Richardson, the fisherman,  
Above the bridge, and then below,  
Two casts, in each of which you throw

From boat anent the southern shore  
(Though when I saw the place before,  
In Mr. Broadwood's time, we tried  
To cover it from the other side).  
Such changes happen, I opine,  
From water being "full" or "fine."  
Here I "gat nought :" Le Colonel,  
Who fishes wonderfully well,  
In wading, landed two or three—  
I cannot speak with certainty.  
(He beat me *then* ; but I may say  
I paid him back another day ;  
Next time we fished it I got more,  
For I accomplished number four.)  
We waited until he had done,  
And from our side went down the run.  
There, as the salmon were in plenty,  
We bagged a fish of one-and-twenty,  
Another, too, of barely ten  
A weight not worthy of my pen) ;

Then, dropping lower, tried “Boat Sheil,”  
The Colonel going to “Elm Wheel,”  
Or to the cast below, where he  
Killed by himself a twenty-three.  
The night turned cold—we homeward wended,  
And so our second day was ended.

On Saturday the sun was splendid,  
In cloudless sky, but not intended,  
With all that brilliancy and spangle,  
To suit a brother of the angle ;  
Yet out we went to take our chance  
(“*Pis-aller*,” as they say in France).  
Up at the Nores we first begin,  
And only move a single fin ;  
But 'twas a monarch of the pool—  
One of the breed they call “grey schule,”  
Because the shoal is dark and grey  
(A separate kind of fesh, they say),  
Not silver in the skin, like others,  
Though as salmonidæ they're brothers.

They're late in running (I've not caught 'em  
Before the latter end of autumn),  
And always heavy those I've seen ;  
This chap in weight was just nineteen.  
We then continued casting on,  
Although our hope of sport was gone.  
Experience proves that fish won't rise  
While the sun's sparkling in their eyes  
Or is reflected on the line,  
Especially when the river's fine.  
The one exceptional chance of slaughter  
Is when the sun shines *up* the water,  
Which, as they lie head up, can't blind them,  
Simply because it comes behind them.  
But for this early morning's best,  
The river running east from west ;  
And this chance also now was lost  
Through prevalence of autumn frost,  
For while that influence chills the air  
Not one in fifty fish will stir ;

Yet if there's sunshine all the day,  
At least it melts the frost away.  
Thus in mishaps we find some food  
To foster a contented mood—  
“ ‘Tis an ill wind that blows no good ;”  
And if the salmon will not rise,  
Still one gets air and exercise,  
Which of themselves are boons, ye ken,  
To us poor sedentary men,  
Whose usual walk is up and down  
The pavements of a smoky town.  
Well ! we had plenty of this boon,  
And nothing else, till afternoon,  
When we reached “ Cowie's Hole ” once more  
Between the hours of three and four—  
A most bewitching time of day,  
When fish are feeding or at play.  
Now with fresh hopes we feast our eyes on  
The sun approaching the horizon :

His rays no longer hurtful prove,  
Or pierce the river from above,  
But strike obliquely off the sky ;  
Just kiss the water as they fly,  
Like swallows dimpling its face  
In the swift circles of their chase,  
Then all surrounding objects fold  
In one bright blaze of molten gold ;  
Each wavelet of the dancing stream  
Is crested with that fiery gleam,  
And the whole atmosphere is mellow  
With orange, red, and gorgeous yellow !  
The glories of this Martin-mass  
Can never from my memory pass.  
I'm fond of drawing ; yet I wish  
Not to draw landscape *now*, but *fish* !  
So let me tell you how we plied  
Our rod in that sweet eventide.  
We were not idle ; for we took  
Three fish with one attractive hook

As quick as I could pull them out,  
Considering their resistance stout.  
A fourth was on, and tired, but yet  
Escaped when almost in the net.  
The weight of booty, when 'twas won,  
Was eighteen, nineteen, twenty-one.

Now, 'tis my happiness to tell  
The chief event which me befell ;  
But as this case of fish and fin  
Forced me a “doctor” to call in,  
So first this doctor I'll describe  
As most efficient of the tribe  
Of artificial flies on Tweed,  
And many other streams indeed.  
For tail a golden pheasant's crest  
(Mind, not too long, a short one's best) ;  
Above it just a little red  
Of wool (repeated at the head) ;  
Next it, two turns of silk, but yellow,  
To make him a real handsome fellow ;

The body ditto, of pale blue,  
With the same tint for hackle too ;  
Three turns of silver tinsel, or  
If the fly's large, you may put four ;  
For shoulder, next the hackle, then  
A feather from the guinea hen.  
Prepare a mixture for the wings—  
That is, a lot of different things—  
Sprigs of macaw, both red and blue,  
And from an Indian bustard too ;  
From golden pheasant's tail a flake,  
With jungle cock, and back of drake ;  
A tippet sometimes forms the rest,  
And over all a larger crest.  
(Mind, if you can procure the same  
Just tipped with red, as if a flame,  
Don't grudge on it to spend your cash,  
Nor think that my advice is rash ;  
I've proved it often worth the pelf,  
Because I make my flies myself.)

Lastly, add eyes from a blue chatterer,  
And you've a salmon's deadly flatterer.  
But if the evening's dark and moody  
You substitute a “silver body,”  
You'll find at twilight that's the thing,  
It supersedes the old “White Wing;”  
The other dressings are the same,  
And “Silver Doctor” is its name—  
Though doctors, I've been often told,  
Don't want your silver, but your gold !  
I'll add that no M.D.'s prescription  
Can beat a dose of this description ;  
Of this I've had experience ample,  
And now I'll give you an example.

One time the Colonel kindly said,  
I'd better leave the boat and wade  
To fish that cast they call “The Whirls,”  
No doubt because the water curls  
Adown its rough and rocky channel.  
('Twas cold, but I was cased in flannel.)

Commencing, I put on "Jock Scott,"  
But not a single rise I got;  
Perhaps because from anxious wish  
The whole of this fine cast to fish,  
I had commenced the work too high—  
At any rate, I changed the fly,  
Put off "Jock Scott" as labour spent  
In vain, and "to the Doctor went"—  
(Not Michael Scott, the wizard grey,  
Recorded in the "minstrel's lay,"  
Who, if alive, "could say to thee  
The words that cleft Eildon's hills in three,  
And bridled the Tweed with a curb of stone,"  
But a more recent wizard—one  
Who at the present day is known  
As keeper of the late Lord John,  
The kindest soul one ever knew,  
And brother of the "bold Buccleuch;"  
By *this* Jock was the fly invented  
Which to my readers is presented.)



This “wizard,” then, I now discarded,  
And for the change was soon rewarded.  
Scarce was I “doctored” when a draw  
Hints to M.D. to “hold his jaw”—  
That is, the salmon’s jaw ; my Doctor  
Had dosed his patient, though he shocked her—  
For ’twas a her—a twenty-one-er  
Fresh from the sea—a “reg’lar stunner.”  
Scarce was she out, when next I fix  
A kipper strong, of twenty-six—  
Then seventeen—and then another  
Sixteen—and all without a bother.  
The play and landing of the four  
Took half an hour, or little more.  
Now, mind you, I was quite alone :  
(For Learmonth and his man were gone  
Above the Bridge to have a cast—  
Not bad, but nothing to this last) ;  
The problem was how I should land  
These fish, alone, and with my hand.

I did it thus—and so might you,  
If the same tactics you pursue :  
When the fish had the hook within it  
I didn't lose a single minute,  
But quickly gained the water-side,  
Which shallowed on a shingle wide ;  
Then, keeping up an even strain,  
While fishie tugs with might and main,  
I backward step until my place is  
From water edge fully thirty paces.  
Now, if the rod be held upright,  
Well bent, and all the tackle tight,  
The stream usurps no strain of line ;  
The fish bears all—and soon is mine.  
Infuriate, but in vain he flies  
Hither and thither—madly tries  
With tail or edge of rock to cut  
My slender thread of single gut,  
(It is *so* slender, round, and clear,  
You scarce can see it in the air ;

But when its toughness you combine  
With spring of rod and horse-hair line,  
It forms a leverage of strength  
To tire the largest fish at length.)  
Now, here's the pinch where I improve  
Th' advantage of my earliest move—  
The fish is not afraid of me—  
I'm too far off for him to see.  
What's the result? I coax him in  
Towards the edge where water's thin ;  
The rapid stream no longer fills  
His mouth, or permeates his gills.  
Hence he receives a less supply  
Of oxygen, and begins to die ;  
For as we faint, if wanting air,  
And sink enfeebled on our chair,  
Just so the fish runs short of breath—  
You plague him literally to death.  
He keeps his weight, but can't preserve  
Muscular force, through want of nerve.

Behold him now, a glittering prize  
Lie flapping there before your eyes !  
Upon the edge I have him stranded ;  
But he's not safe until he's *landed* !  
This is, in fact, the awful crisis—  
Help me, Osiris and Isis !  
For, if you've leave from him of Ammon,  
You catch far heavier fish than salmon ;  
Because, being resident on the Nile,  
You can “go in” for crocodile—  
He's not so handsome, but he's bigger,  
And the best bait's to spin a nigger !  
But if the hook within him lingers,  
Take my advice, and mind your fingers !  
Or to ensure them from a spike  
You'd better practice first on pike !  
Joking apart, without a sound  
I lay my rod upon the ground,  
And cutting in behind my prey  
I turn him from the stream away—

His tail affords a fatal grasp,  
Quite easy for the hand to clasp—  
I don't attempt to lift him yet,  
For fish are slippery when they're wet ;  
But from the water turn his snout,  
And as he lies, just tail him out !  
Sliding him cannily up the shingle,  
While temples throb, and fingers tingle.  
Now, that's the way I served the four,  
And fain would try it on some more.  
Here I'll remark a Tweedside Scot  
Has odd ideas of doctors got ;  
He cannot have much faith their skill in  
To quote them, not for cures, but killin' !  
A salmon's “cured” with salt and smoke—  
A salmon “doctored” is no joke.  
It does not seem to be enough  
To fill his mouth with nauseous stuff ;  
A “Doctor's” brought to punch his head,  
The dose repeating till he's dead !

For thus they designate, in chaff,  
A thing like a policeman's staff  
With which they rap him on the skull  
Till he's to all sensation dull—  
A dubious compliment to pay  
To all the doctors of the day !  
If of such deeds a jury heard, or  
Gave verdict, 'twould be, "Wilful murder"—  
True, the fish does not lose, but gain,  
Because he's quickly freed from pain ;  
But doctors, as it seems to me,  
Suffer a grievous obloquy !—  
Why don't the faculty unite  
Anglers for libel to indite,  
And for large damages apply  
To soothe their wounded dignity ?  
But, after all, they need not care,  
For quizzes other people share :  
And 'tis an honour which they gain,  
That they their multitudes have slain.

Flies are so various in each region,  
We might denominate them “legion.”  
The catalogue my brain bewilders :  
There’s “Lascelles,” “Denison,” and “Childers,”  
There’s “Baronet” from Richard Sutton  
(All yellow, which we’ve often put on),  
There’s “Colonel,” “General,” and “Major”  
(Each would fish t’other for a wager !)  
And “Butcher,” whom to try you’re willing,  
For he’s professional at killing ;  
There’s “Parson,” “Fairy,” “Dragon,” “Tartan,”  
Not to forget another smart ‘un  
Known on the Tweed as “Durham Ranger,”  
Which often puts the fish in danger.  
Now, for great connoisseurs ’tis well  
On these minutiae to dwell ;  
But a few patterns, I’ll confess,  
Satisfy me—say six, or less.  
I like to rise by early light,  
Or, if need be, to work at night,

And tie myself a fly or two,  
Which for the occasion ought to do.  
You choose your colours, dull or gay,  
According to the style of day ;  
But the main truth of killing flies  
Is less in pattern than in *size*.  
A fisherman takes up your book  
With rather supercilious look,  
As if to say, “Don’t you pretend  
To vie with *me* in *this*, my friend !”  
He turns the pages inside out,  
And rummages each hook about ;  
At last he takes a certain fly,  
And holds it up against the sky,  
Or watches its effect afloat,  
In the clear stream beside the boat,  
As if to test his own selection  
Before he gives it his affection.  
Now, if you’re wise you’ll raise no question,  
But simply act on his suggestion ;

For though the man's of humble station,  
He's master of the situation.  
Ask him his reason, and he's dumb—  
He calculates by rule of thumb—  
That is, by instinct—yet you'll find  
The fish are generally of his mind ;  
But clearly, in his choice of flies,  
He's most punctilious about *size*.  
You must have substance, do believe me,  
To bring up fish, if water's heavy ;  
But when the river's running fine  
With smaller hooks you bait your line.  
I've seen great lumping fish pulled out  
With little things you'd use for trout.  
That contest often ends in smoke—  
I mean you're likely to be broke ;  
But there's no choice when water's small—  
'Tis either this or none at all.

And now you'll wish that I was done,  
For a tremendous yarn I've spun !

But one adventure I must tell,  
Which at Makerston me befel ;  
A contest with a prince of kippers  
In a wild cast they call “South Clippers.”  
The river here, it must be said,  
Runs on a solid rocky bed  
That’s honeycombed and split in furrows,  
Through which the water seethes and burrows  
A central ridge above these seams  
Divides them into kindred streams,  
Which are denoted South and North,  
And are about of equal worth.  
In each the channel’s deep and narrow,  
The current speeding like an arrow  
From archer’s bow ; while rocks afford  
To running fish a “casual ward.”  
We were just landing a bull-trout,  
When from the eddy’s tail sprung out  
A salmon with so bold a rise  
As to exaggerate his size.

“ Heh ! what a fesh ! 'twas gey an' clear,  
A've no' seen bonnier the year !  
A'm thinking, yet A'll no' declare,  
He's eicht-an'-twunty pund or mair !  
We'll juist examine a' the gear,  
An' tak' the best precautions here :  
If ye heuk thon, I ken it weel,  
He'll fecht ye like the verra deil !”  
So said, so done—our careful eyes  
Th' entire tackle scrutinize ;  
Nay, more, we try each knot and strand  
By heavy tension through the hand ;  
The cast-line bravely stands the test,  
For Bernard serves me with the best ;  
There's not a flaw ; then we prepare  
To fish the cast again with care.  
The line each inch of water covers,  
Till my seductive Doctor hovers  
Precisely o'er the very place  
Where we had seen our patient's face.

Our first attempt has no success—  
“ He’s shy of visitors, I guess ”—  
He mightn’t see, or else the sight  
Served but to whet his appetite—  
Next time he’s up, and no mistakes !  
An angry boil the surface breaks,  
In token that he’s come at last,  
And I have hooked him hard and fast !  
“ Eh, sir ! ye’ve getten haud ! that’s grand !  
Be cannie ! Keep ’im weel in hand.  
Ye mauna let ’im droon yere line,  
But keep forment him—so—that’s fine.  
Reel up !—there’s rocks in there !—behind !  
He’ll rax ye, if ye dinna mind !”  
These are the sort of interjections,  
Commixed with many sage reflections,  
Which oft salute my wond’ring ears  
While salmo struggles and careers—  
Then of a sudden, all is still !  
He’s sulking now—and sulk he will !

“The muckle beest !” poor Hendrie groans,  
And takes to pelting him with stones ;  
Though I keep up a heavy strain,  
Move him I can’t—it’s all in vain ;  
I’ve lost all purchase ; you must know  
He’s in some ledge of rock below :  
The line by this obstruction flanked,  
And in great risk of being “ hanked.”  
Thus I held on, bereft of power,  
For fully more than half an hour ;  
Hendrie still trying to dislodge him,  
And with the pole of net to podge him.  
’Twas, you’ll admit, a great disheart’ner  
To have this kind of sleeping partner !  
Sleeping ! you’ll say—that’s a mistake ;  
Methinks your partner’s wide awake !  
He’s given you “ check,” at any rate—  
Take care it doesn’t prove checkmate !  
For till you get a counter strain  
To bear upon him once again,

You'll no more draw him from that shelf  
Than you can move the rock itself.  
Now, that this last attempt be made  
There's nothing for it but to wade.  
When young, I might have tried th' experiment  
In desperation, or in merriment ;  
But now I'll keep to solid ground ;  
I've no intention to be drowned.  
Just at this pinch I've notice “ walcome,”  
“ Here comes George Wright and Mr. Malcolm.”  
George Wright's a slim and wiry fellow  
With hair between a red and yellow,  
You'll know what's meant if I say “ foxy,”  
A creature qualified for his proxy ;  
Or, rather, he's a kind of otter,  
For in Makerston there's no spot or  
Stone up above the stream or under,  
But what he knows without a blunder.  
He soon took in the exact position,  
And solved it like a math'matician.

“Lend me the rod,” says he quite pat,  
“And I’ll persuade him out o’ that.”  
What can I do ?—I’m in a mess—  
Pocket my pride and acquiesce.  
With that, he leans on Hendrie’s shoulders,  
And jumps knee deep on sunken boulders,  
Poising himself across each stone  
Like Blondin when the tight rope on ;  
But if at any step he’d slipped  
Beyond his depth he must have dipped,  
Which might have been a fatal fall  
For booted George, and rod, and all.  
The issue you will take for granted—  
He got the purchase that he wanted.  
The rod-point turned another way,  
Proceeded to unshelve the prey ;  
The fish once more was made to feel  
The pressure of the vengeful steel ;  
To generalship obliged to yield,  
And fairly ousted from his bield ;

But though constrained to use his fin,  
He's not a thought of giving in.  
Wright cautiously regains the shore,  
And hands to me the rod once more.  
'Tis scarce returned when down the stream  
The salmon rushes like a dream !  
There's no choice but to follow after,  
While Malcolm shouts and screams with laughter ;  
But I can't gallop on those stones,  
Down I should come and break my bones.  
I've got the will, but not the force,  
So Wright's again the winning horse ;  
In truth, it was a dangerous quarter—  
A hundred yards of broken water,  
Foaming and white, 'mid pointed blocks  
Of boulder stones and massive rocks,  
Until the cataract ends at last  
In a fresh stream they call "Laird's cast."  
Down splashed the fish, bereft of breath,  
Wright holding to him like "grim death,"

Bounding along "*a pas gymnastique*,"  
With plunging strides, and limb elastic,  
The pliant rod a perfect arch,  
The tune a galoppe or quick march !  
The gallant fish had done his best,  
But now he sadly wanted rest ;  
As vital force was nigh expended  
His strong career was quickly ended.  
We coax him with a little play  
Into a quiet cheeky bay,  
Where by George Wright he soon was netted,  
And "eighteen-pounder" then gazetted.  
This shows how easy 'tis to make  
In weight of fish a large mistake,  
Before you bring your friend to book  
By trial on the weighing hook.  
Yet, after all, it's often found  
That a good fish of eighteen pound  
Gives you more toil and anxious trouble  
Than a great beastie weighing double.

Now let me sing of hospitality  
(It is dear Scotland's nationality).  
At Ancrum's old baronial mansion,  
One of indefinite expansion,  
Where good Sir William and his Lady  
To see their friends are always ready.  
(It was by his kind invitation  
I had this latter recreation :  
He shares that water I was trapped in  
With Malcolm, and his son, “the Captain,”  
Described to me as, speaking candid,  
“A fesher juist entirely splendid.”)  
The children of that dear old place  
Inherit all their parents' grace :  
They're specimens of breeding high,  
And full of gentle courtesy.  
So the house breathes an atmosphere  
Of warmth, and love, and gen'rous cheer.  
Twould be but a *rechauffee* dish  
To tell the capture of each fish :

My total, counting these two more  
Caught at Makerston, reached a score ;  
Their weight, as taken on the ground,  
Three hundred, sixty, and five pound ;  
The average, upwards of eighteen,  
Was larger than I'd ever seen ;  
But others, I was told, had done  
An average of twenty-one.  
Well ! I'm content ; for without wrangling  
I had a first-rate bit of angling.

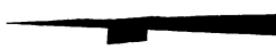
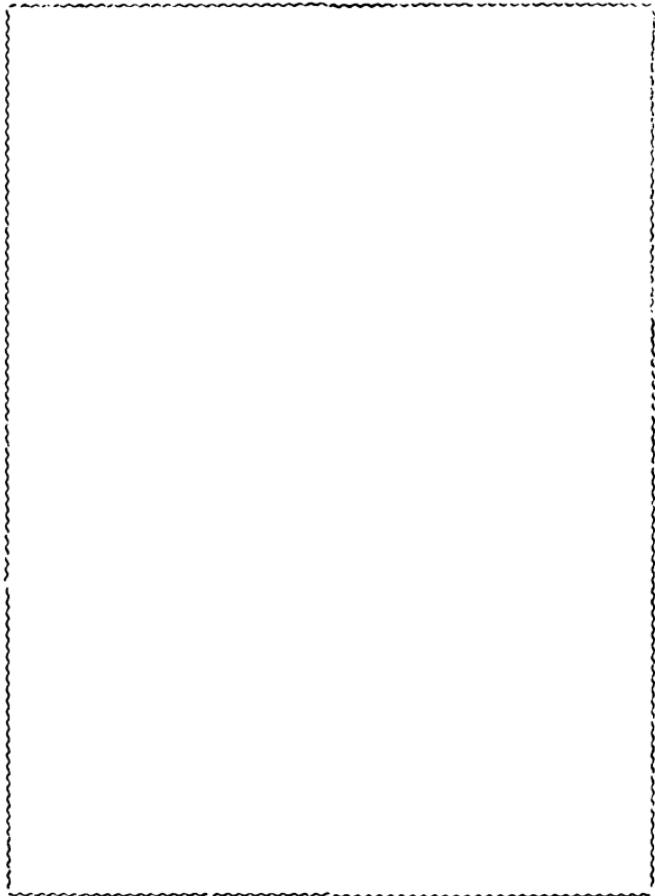
Here, then, concludes my fishing visit ;  
You're free to laugh, my friends, and quiz it.  
Guilty I'll plead to many a flaw,  
Yet judge me not by Jedburgh law,  
Since that was far too grave for laughter,  
They hung you first, and tried you after !  
But criticise me as you will,  
I'll keep to windward of you still,  
For there's a maxim true with fins  
As well as men—he laughs who wins.

So I'll laugh too ; for I profess  
My outing was a great success.

F I N I S.



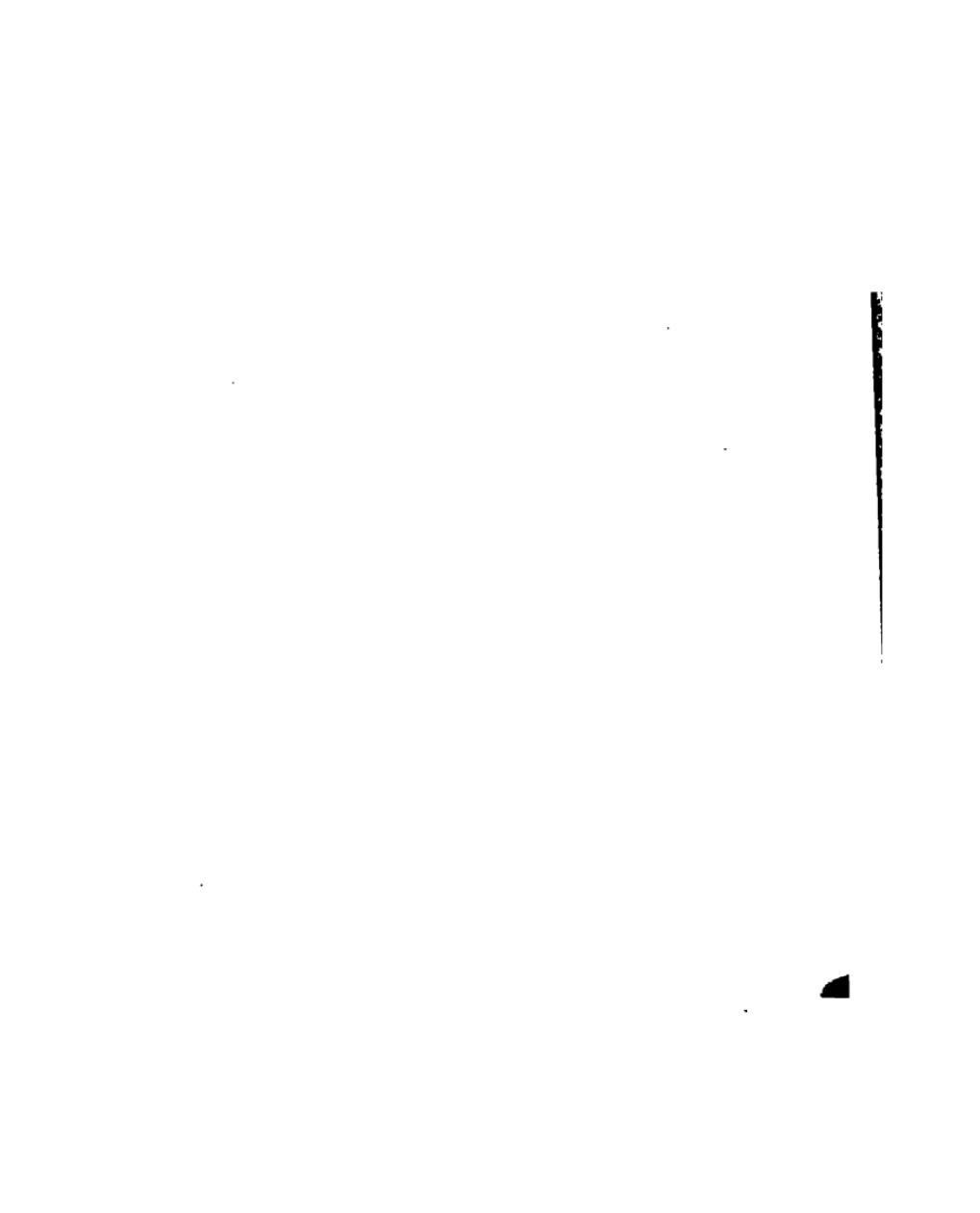
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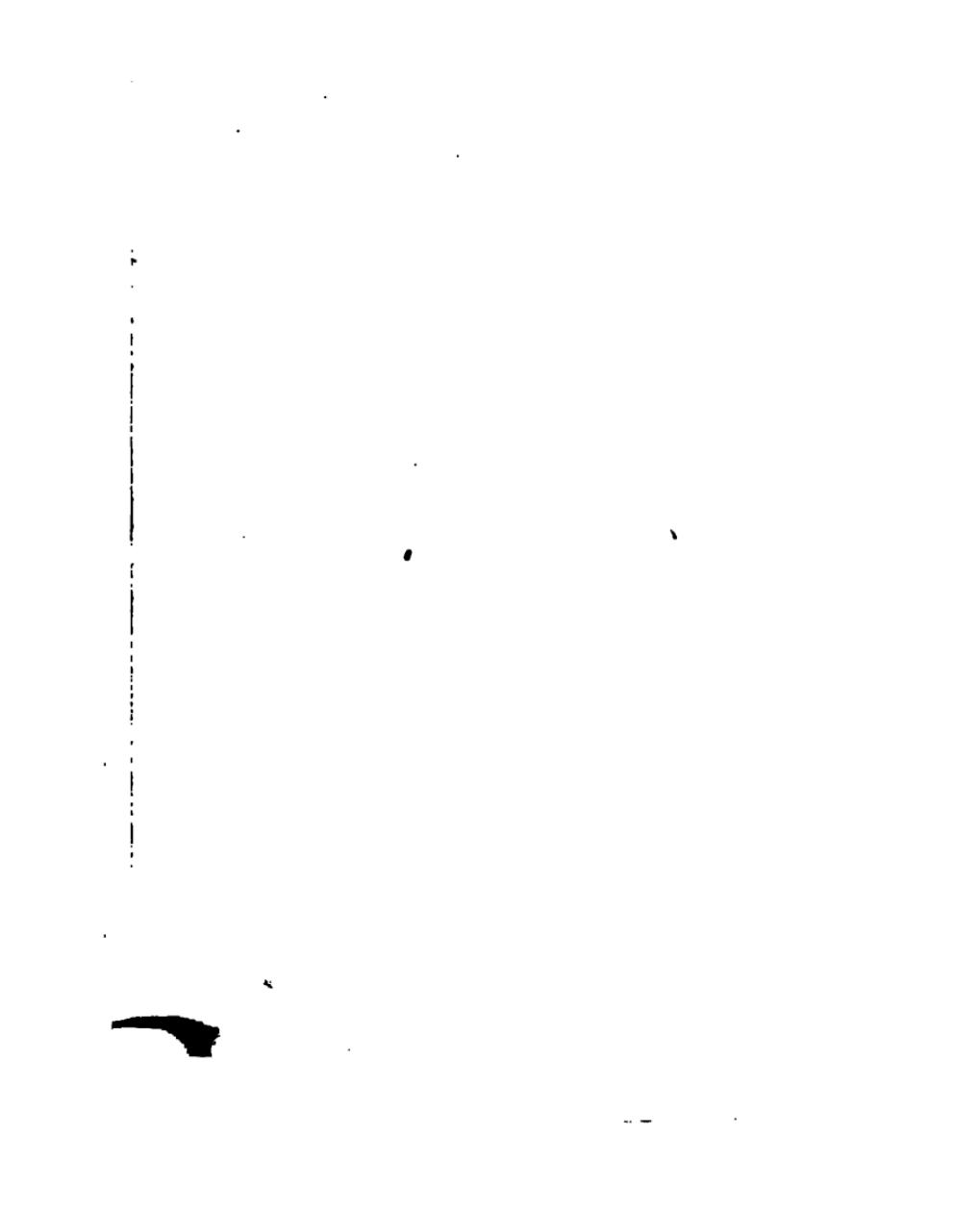
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T H E

# "Lay of the East Angler."

CANTO II.

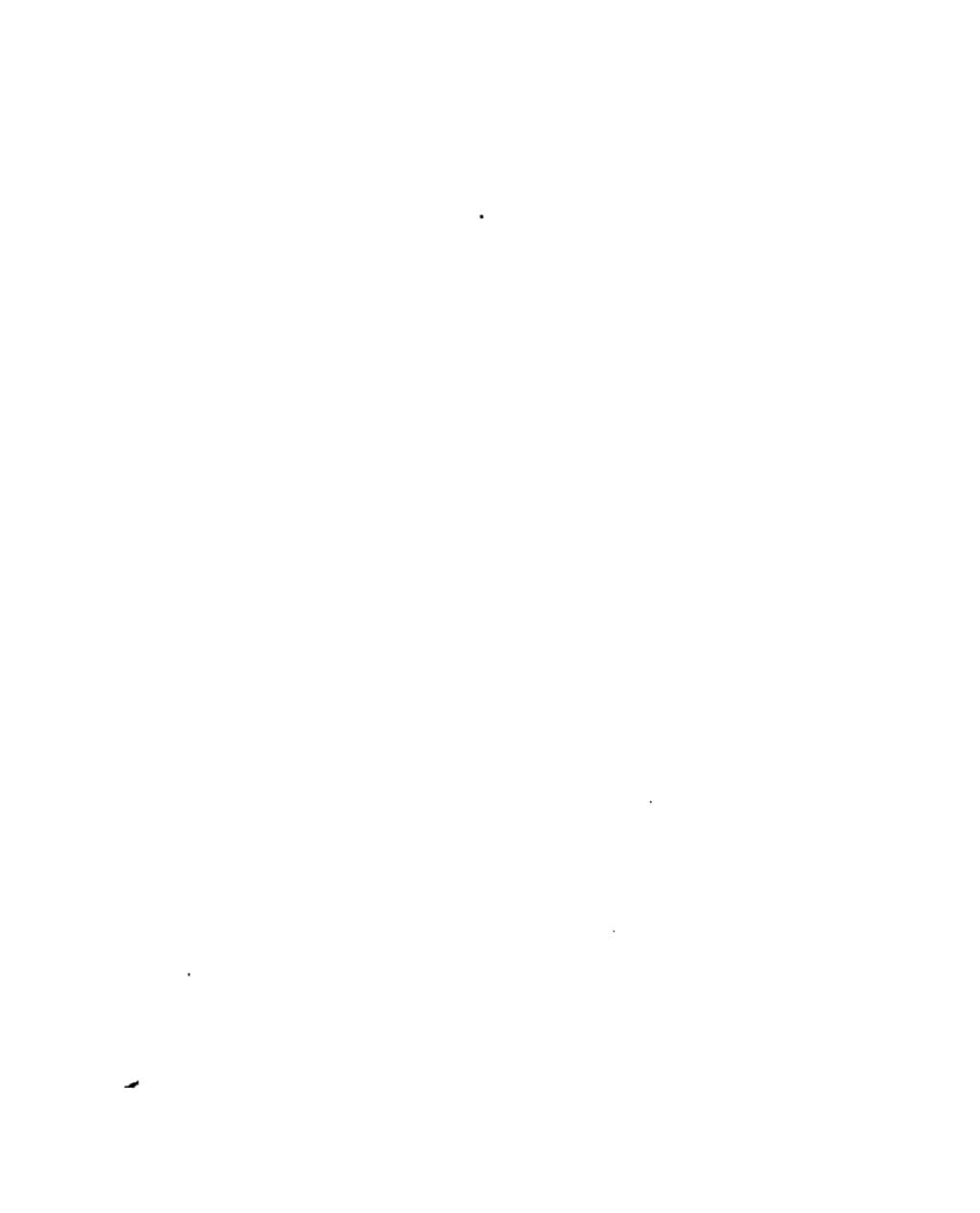
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T H E

“*Lay of the Last Angler.*”

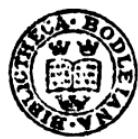
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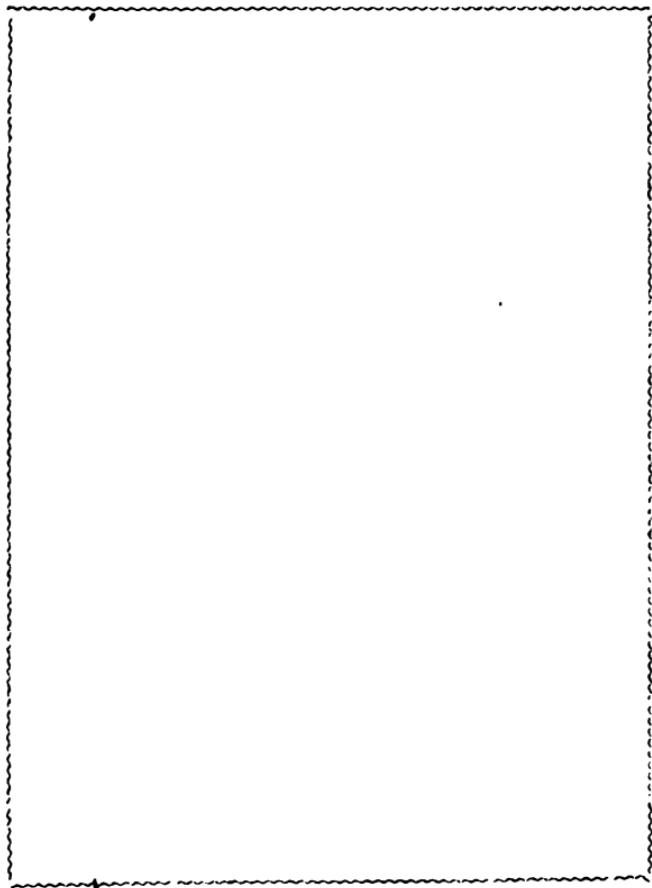
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REPRINTED 1881.



To Charlotte, Alexander's gentle mate,  
Whose unassuming ways add charm to beauty,  
A northern guest desires to dedicate  
These lines in token of his grateful duty.



## “THE LAY OF THE LAST ANGLER.”

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### CANTO II.

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HREE years ago an angler tried to write,  
For friends' amusement, an exact narra-  
tion

Of some events, which gave him much delight,  
In the brief compass of a month's vacation.

It told of his adventures in the Tweed,  
That queen of rivers, on the Scottish border,  
Whose salmon fishing nothing can exceed,  
Provided that the water be in order.

The hospitable home, where he was guest,  
Was in a beautiful secluded quarter;

They called it “Snuggery,” and “Cushat’s Nest,”  
Embosomed in its trees above the water.

The peaks of Eildon’s range might thence be seen,  
Gleaming with tints of Autumn’s golden glory,  
While on their slopes were woods and pastures  
green,  
Around Melrose, so famed in classic story.

In close proximity the river sped  
Its downward course, through rocky scaur and  
shingle,  
Now tossed in waves along th’ uneven bed,  
With raucous sounds that make one’s life-blood  
tingle;

Then gliding into pools at calmer pace,  
Where the deep channel makes its progress steady,  
Though oily circles, bursting on its face,  
Proclaim to fisher’s eye the run or eddy.

In such a spot a casual plunge denotes  
That finny monsters lie beneath secluded ;  
And if your fly above them deftly floats,  
Perchance to take it they may be deluded.

Not that it's done so easy as you think,  
However skilled you be, or bent on slaughter ;  
Just as you cannot make your cattle drink,  
Although you put their noses to the water.

So I will venture to assure my friends,  
Who in the fisher's craft have had no training,  
That salmon's feeding humour much depends  
On many causes, which require explaining.

'Tis by good fortune's favour you procure  
The stream and weather in exact condition,  
Such as may fair success to toil ensure,  
And satisfy a fisherman's ambition.

At times, with weather, water, fish at hand,  
There's something yet your skill and patience  
taxing ;

You cast in vain !—at length you understand,  
The fatal secret oozes out—“ She's waxing !”

That is, a distant spate or fall of rain,  
Of which one had no previous intimation,  
Comes down the river, making it sustain  
In more or less degree some augmentation.

The fish with subtle taste at once perceive  
The earliest symptoms of the water swelling,  
And cease to feed, from eagerness to leave  
Their present quarters for another dwelling.

Increasing depth enables them with ease  
To pass obstructions, which would else impede them,  
And they can migrate wheresoe'er they please,  
Just as experience, or chance, may lead them ;

Parental instincts prompting them to go,  
Where the amount of water will allow it,  
To gravel shoals, on which they cast their roe,  
That sun and air with life may soon endow it.

Perhaps the "fresh" of water mayn't exceed  
An altitude of half-a-dozen inches ;  
But while it comes, a fish declines to feed,  
It rises short—is not in earnest—flinches.

But when the river falls from previous flood,  
The salmon also are content to settle ;  
The prospect of success will then be good,  
And fish, as well as fishers, on their mettle.

If at such times a salmon be "clean run"—  
That is, from off the sea has lately started—  
He'll rise with boldness and afford some fun,  
Nor yield the victory till life's departed.

But in proportion to his choicest state,  
The hold upon his mouth is “varra kittle ;”  
He’ll tear away sometimes by force of weight,  
Because the structure of his skin’s so brittle.

Whereas when fish are in the river long  
They lose their bright condition altogether ;  
They’re rusty, flabby, shy, and not so strong,  
But tougher in the mouth, and more like leather.

Doubtless they’ve had their taste of previous flies,  
But found their sting was sharp and rather vicious ;  
So, as experience makes the foolish wise,  
Of all such lures they’re wary and suspicious.

And yet this one exception may be made,  
That when a salmon quits his ancient quarters,  
To take the fly he’s not so much afraid  
In a new home of unaccustomed waters,

As if the spot at which he'd felt the hook,  
And not the hook itself, were fraught with danger,  
Or that the fly assumed a different look  
In streams to which the fish is yet a stranger.

But to my task—I will not now re-state  
The angling with which once I was enraptured,  
When eighteen and a quarter pounds of weight  
Were averaged in the twenty fish I captured.

In honesty I'd rather now confess  
To failures since, and humbly state some reasons  
Why probabilities of sport grow less  
With the increasing dryness of our seasons.

In former times, when with a copious rain  
The adjacent land was fully saturated,  
A goodly height the river would retain  
For days and days, in measure unabated.

But now that drainage carries off the wet  
So rapidly by schemes of modern farming,  
Rivers run in at once; and shortly get  
A meagreness to anglers quite alarming.

Dear Tweedie stagnates, and a fetid slime  
Accumulates about the stones and channel ;  
Mixed up at Galashiels from time to time  
With woollen thread and scraps of greasy flannel !

How can one hope the wretched fish will feed,  
Or look at flies in any eager manner,  
When they're as squeamish with this filthy weed  
As if they'd taken Ipecacuanha !

It needs the scouring of a six-foot flood  
(I speak within the bounds of moderation)  
To clear the channel of this odious mud,  
And make it fit for salmon's habitation.

Nay, till such flood has reached to Berwick Bay,  
Imbuing all the offing with its flavour,  
The salmon, though impatient of delay,  
In their migration upwards always waver.

One here and there by accident may stroll,  
Impelled by instincts of which I'm no critic,  
Either to spawn, or in some stream to roll,  
And rid itself of insects parasitic.

For the tide lice persistently adhere  
To a poor salmon's skin about the shoulder,  
And bite it with proboscis like a spear,  
Of which I've often been th' amazed beholder.

The presence of this insect is a test  
Of clean run fish, and excellent condition ;  
But to the salmon it must be a pest  
That calls, if possible, for demolition ;

14      "THE LAY OF THE LAST ANGLER."

And as it can't survive above a week  
Out of the reach of salt or tidal water,  
The salmon up the rivers shelter seek  
In order to ensure its timely slaughter.

Here I must occupy a little time  
Another insect on these fish to mention—  
Haunting them, not when in condition prime,  
But when their health is suffering declension.

For when the kelt its spawning work fulfils,  
And is reduced to much emaciation,  
A tiny kind of leech infects its gills  
By thousands, hindering free respiration.

Salt is the remedy for this disease,  
And in solution forms the needful lotion,  
Which from this enemy the salmon frees  
The moment that it plunges in the ocean.

But if by chance the early spring be dry,  
And thus the fish be hindered from descending  
To river's mouth, the salmon often die,  
Instead of, what the fishermen call, “mending.”

Sometimes the malady attacks the brain,  
And seems to drive the fish completely frantic ;  
They'll run themselves ashore as if insane,  
And perish by this suicidal antic.

Such mites are thus a providential spur  
To urge the salmon to its change of quarters—  
First, that the spawning process may occur,  
And health be next restored in tidal waters.

Some fish, as I've described, will run from sea  
In units, even when the river's little,  
That they from these intruders may be free ;  
One here and there you'll get, though shy and kittle.

16      "THE LAY OF THE LAST ANGLER"

Still, no exceptions only prove the rule,  
The mass of fish at sea retain their dwelling,  
And will not mount the river in "a schule"  
Without the freshened water's previous swelling.

But then you'll realize an angler's dream,  
The usual course of sober facts exceeding,  
When each familiar cast of pool or stream  
Would be alive with silvery beauties feeding !

And they who in a neighbourhood can stay,  
To bide this happy chance, it stands to reason,  
May do more execution in a day  
Than others in a month or half a season.

But failure in this point checkmated me,  
When I'd some expectation to have caught 'em  
(Though disappointed I was doomed to be),  
In a brief visit to the Tweed last autumn.

Success 'twas not my happy lot to find,  
In spite of perseverance and attention ;  
The fish were scarce and of inferior kind,  
And I'd more blanks than I should care to mention.

A fortnight previous there had been a fresh,  
Creating among anglers some sensation,  
Because it brought an average run of "fesh,"  
Which for some days afforded recreation.

But when I came, this first October flood  
Was followed in small measure by a second,  
Which, far from rendering the fishing good,  
Destroyed the hope on which we'd fondly reckoned.

It urged that recent batch from us to go  
To upper waters, whither we could trace them ;  
But from the sea or river's pools below  
No fresh ones came sufficient to replace them.

Now, I've heard say that no men can advance  
Their claim to be true brothers of the angle,  
Unless they'll fish for days with scarce a chance,  
Yet persevere, without complaint or wrangle.

Not that the call for patience is so great,  
For in mere casting there's such fascination  
As keeps one to the last with hope elate,  
And every throw affords some variation.

Nay, whether luck be good or bad, I ween,  
Though some esteem my words an empty fable,  
That as the day wears on I grow more keen,  
And fish away as long as I am able.

For if the water's small and fish are shy,  
The chance is best as daylight is declining ;  
I've caught 'em, when I couldn't see my fly,  
Long after sunset, while the moon was shining.

Again I've wandered ! Gentle reader, pray  
Excuse me here and there a brief digression,  
For when a thought occurs I give it play—  
That is, in words I let it find expression.

My work began one quiet autumn day,  
With dear old Purdie, on Pavilion water—  
(His master, Coventry, was at the Spey,  
According to the statement of his daughter.)

We lost a big fish in the Quarry stream,  
But caught another smaller one below it,  
So ugly ! that I hailed it with a scream,  
Since for a salmon I could scarcely know it.

“That juist bates a,” said Purdie with a grin,  
When this queer nondescript was safely netted ;  
“ ‘Tis an uncanny beastie !”—for its skin  
Was like a toad’s, with greasy water wetted.

We couldn't mend it ! and, descending, tried  
"The Whorls," where all our efforts were rejected ;  
So, drawing up our coble to the side,  
We ate our lunch, and better luck expected.

"John, have you finished ? If so, take a cast,  
While I can rest a wee bit at my leisure—  
To see you throw will sweeten my repast,  
And give us both, if not the fish, a pleasure."

"Hout, it's nae use," was John's discreet reply,  
Though balancing the rod across his shoulder ;  
"And yet, maybe, there's ane wad tak' the fly,  
I see'd him juist forment than outer boulder."

Then crafty John paid out a wondrous line,  
Yard upon yard from off the reel uncoiling,  
And drove it with a touch like feather fine  
Close to the eddy where the stream was boiling.

‘Twas a few yards above “The Boat Shiel Rock,”  
Where “The Whorls cast” into that other merges ;  
And the choice place is noted by a block  
Of darkened stone, round which the water surges.

John keeps above until he’s got the length  
Which for his purpose is exactly needed,  
Then makes his cast, with no apparent strength,  
But with precision not to be exceeded.

The line, first gently lifted to its end,  
Is by a stately swing of rod deflected,  
Describing in the air a graceful bend,  
Then in a slanting way across directed.

Onward it goes, as straight as any dart,  
And plop ! the fly just lights upon the water,  
While a small twitter comes about my heart,  
As though it could forestall the coming slaughter.

22      "THE LAY OF THE LAST ANGLER."

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Yes ! there he is !—the rod denotes a draw ;  
The line's a-taut, and there's a heavy flounder !  
For John has fixed his hook into the jaw  
Of a "gude fesh," a three-and-twenty pounder !

Then looking round with smile of quiet fun,  
He hands to me the rod of which he's master,  
To finish, if I can, what he'd begun,  
And soon we land our prey without disaster.

We caught a third, if I remember right,  
About "The Wheel," which usually is fruity ;  
And at the gloaming took our homeward flight,  
Sufficiently contented with our booty.

Some five or six in after days were all  
With which my angling labour was rewarded—  
Results, you'll say, so lamentably small,  
That as "reward" they cannot be regarded.

So, as I've little incident to tell  
Of the Pavilion's angling, and successes  
(Sweet as that visit was), I'd rather dwell  
On some few more poor fisherman's distresses.

I've tried to show the influential share  
That water has upon a salmon's rising ;  
But they're as sensitive of outward air,  
Which acts upon them in a way surprising.

For instance, in a stormy kind of day,  
Be it from hail, tempestuous wind, or thunder,  
You'll scarcely raise one, labour as you may,  
Or if you do, 'twill be a special wonder.

Again, if hard-edged clouds of glaring white  
Be rolled across the sky in solid masses,  
Or lines of mist encumber Eildon's height,  
The day without achievement mostly passes.

Then if the water's heated by the sun,  
And atmosphere be muggy and oppressive,  
Be sure with salmon little's to be done ;  
They sleep, or their *insouciance* is excessive.

A flood might obviate for a time the first  
Of these two faults ; but, jointly, they're the reason  
Why, in my judgment, August is the worst  
Of any month in all the angling season.

It is as detrimental to success  
(A recollection of it makes me shiver !)  
When the caloric of the air is less  
By some degrees than water in the river.

So in hoar frost, or with impending snow,  
When Richardson and I with cold were quaking,  
I toiled until my arms could scarcely throw,  
Yet without e'en a single salmon taking.

But *vice versa*, if the water's cold,  
And atmosphere by accident be warmer,  
As happens oft in spring, the fish are bold,  
And an appropriate fly will prove a charmer.

One more obstruction gives an angler grief—  
When vegetation of the trees is failing,  
And we encounter clouds of fallen leaf  
By thousands in the air, or water sailing,

Perhaps you're casting in a likely stream,  
And a slight check sets you on rises thinking ;  
But soon you waken from so fond a dream,  
'Tis but a leaf, which on your hook is sinking !

You jerk it briskly out, and then it spins  
As if 'twere mounted on a trolling swivel,  
One might suppose that it's alive, and grins  
Just like a kelpie (that's a water devil !)

If from an elm or hazel it should drop,  
You'll shake it off perhaps, because it's slighter ;  
But oak and beech are sturdy, and will stop,  
You must haul in your line before you right her.

Now, when this cause of trouble and complaint  
Is constantly on breezy days repeated,  
It well might try the temper of a saint  
To be in this provoking manner cheated.

Some friend will say, “ You discontented man !  
Your remedy is plain if you'll receive it ;  
Why don't you stay at home such days? you can—  
If you don't like to fish, you're free to leave it.”

“ Pardon ! I don't complain : I'm stating facts,”  
To such rebukes would be my answer humble ;  
“ But I'll relate my own more recent acts,  
Though 'tis a Briton's privilege to grumble !”

One day Lord Polwarth gave me leave to try  
The Mertoun water with his keeper, Sandy  
(He's Purdie's brother, and an old ally,  
With boat or net pre-eminently handy.)

Dear, venerable Mertoun ! how I love  
Thy wooded heights, and banks of sober beauty !  
Where, nestling undisturbed, the cushat dove  
Rears its young offspring with unwearied duty.

Cooing aloft upon some leafy spray,  
Her faithful partner pouts with exultation :  
"I watch thee, dear one !" he would seem to say,  
"And fain would share thy task of incubation."

Sweet birdie ! gentlest of the feathered race,  
Symbol of peace and conjugal affection !  
To greet thee I must give this little space,  
Thy notes awakening many a fond reflection !

But in the range of those sequestered grounds,  
Where creatures wander free and unsuspicious,  
There are a number of congenial sounds  
Which to my ear are equally delicious.

The warblers' varied songs, and hum of bees  
Extracting honey from the fragrant clover ;  
The soughing of the wind among the trees,  
And plaintive cries of curlew or of plover.

(I'll venture to suggest, it would be found,  
Were we but gifted with the penetration,  
That every tree has a distinctive sound,  
According to its foliage, size, and station.)

Then there's the diapason of the Tweed,  
Blending all tones with its harmonious power,  
As its sonorous waters roll with speed  
Around the rocky precipice of Craigower.

Perched on that summit is a fisher's cot  
(It was in by-gone days old Purdie's dwelling),  
Full many a time I've lingered on the spot—  
The memory of it sets my heart a-swelling !

From thence no lovelier scene can greet one's eye  
Than that fair panorama in expansion ;  
Below, the river winds in reaches by,  
And opposite is Mertoun's lordly mansion.

Beyond its lines of wood old Smailholm rears  
Its ragged outline 'gainst the northern sky,  
Renowned for having nursed in childhood's years  
Th' immortal bard of Scottish minstrelsy.

Eastward huge Cheviot looms in neutral blue,  
Softened by distance to aerial lightness ;  
While Eildon's triad bounds the western view,  
Which setting suns enrich with ruby brightness.

I'll venture to pourtray one feature more  
In sketching beauteous Mertoun's situation.  
Notice that lonely fisher near the shore !  
(Below “Stile-foot” he takes his usual station.)

Don't be afraid that he will interfere  
With *your* day's sport, because he's not a caster,  
Though, in his own peculiar way, 'tis clear  
That he's a finished and successful master.

See ! how he stalks along the pebbly strand,  
With keen eye watching each sub-aqueous motion,  
Wading knee-deep for hours he will stand,  
Yet as to taking cold he scorns the notion !

He needs no rod, nor line, nor fishing book,  
Although he makes his living on the water :  
He catches all his fish without a hook,  
But when “he's getten haud” he gives no quarter !

It is an ancient heron—I believe,  
Forty years old at least—a dear relation,  
Who's much at Mertoun, says he can perceive  
Of its identity much indication.

Its haunts and habits always are the same—  
What lots of fish ere this has he digested !  
And the old poacher's wonderfully tame,  
Because he never is at all molested.

Still, he's a wary bird, and thinks aright,  
“The better part of valour is discretion ;”  
So if you come too near, he takes to flight  
With pompous gravity beyond expression.

But now for work : I found the Mertoun boat  
On Craigow'r pool, where I put up my tackle,  
And Sandy Purdie soon had me afloat  
(My fly a toppy with blue shoulder hackle.)

The day was fair, the water not so bad ;  
A little fresh had set the fish a-rising,  
And Sandy thought some sport was to be had,  
Which made me keener and more enterprising.

After a dozen casts we hooked our first,  
An eighteen-pounder baggit, clear and noble,  
And though she bravely fought, and did her worst,  
We quickly had her safe within the coble.

Then paddling up from where we had begun,  
Or coaxing on the boat with gentle pushes,  
We reached the upper portion of the run,  
Where from “The Webbs” the torrent fiercely  
rushes.

“Here,” Sandy said, “ye’ll need a shorter line,  
Ye maunna work the fly, but keep it steady,  
Hang it beyond them bullers—aye, that’s fine ;  
Hech ! a grand fesh ! ye’d see him in the eddy.”

"O yes ! I saw him through the dancing waves ;  
Just as he turned, I caught the silver shimmer ;  
I seldom fail to spy the cunning knaves,  
Although from age my sight is somewhat dimmer."

"Bide a wee bit ; maybe's he'll yet be ta'en,  
Unless ye progged him, and he kens his danger;  
If so, be sure he winna come again :  
We'll change the huik, and try a Durham Ranger."

It soon was evident that our chance was gone ;  
He'd made one offer, but declined another ;  
But in few casts we got a fellow on  
Of smaller size—perhaps his younger brother.

We won that prize by an auspicious stroke ;  
For I remember, after he was netted,  
We found the hook by some mischance was broke ;  
But he was ours—and sixteen pound gazetted.

We took a third in that capacious pool,  
Whose rocky depths are always well frequented ;  
Of fish indeed it usually is full,  
And many casts in it are represented.

This last—*the last indeed!*—was seventeen,  
So we had made a pretty good beginning ;  
For all the three were handsome, bright, and clean,  
And what we'd won gave hopes of further winning.

“Stile-foot” without the least result was passed  
(I cannot say from it I much expected),  
Though 'tis in every sense a pretty cast,  
From northern wind by wooded banks protected.

Then we dropt down to an illustrious stream  
Below the mansion, thence “House Stream” de-  
noted,  
Which, though of limited extent, the cream  
Of casts in Mertoun water might be quoted.

A seam of ruddy sandstone rock pervades  
The river's bed for many yards in distance,  
Divided into flaky steps or blades,  
And massive boulders of the same consistence.

The level sinks abruptly at the place,  
And, urged in downward course by gravitation,  
The water rushes at a furious pace,  
Venting in crested waves its agitation.

Full in the centre of that surging foam,  
In a wild lair by jutting stones compacted,  
A lordly kipper had his “casual home,”  
And by the fly was visibly attracted.

He missed it once, and yet the rise was bold !  
Affording proof his appetite was greedy.  
Another throw succeeded—he took hold !  
And let us know it with a vengeance speedy !

Lashing the surface first, as if to feel  
The nature of this linear tenacity,  
And curbed by pressure of the pointed steel,  
He darted forwards with a fierce audacity.

Soon was I conscious of his ponderous strength !  
With lightning swiftness up the stream he speeded  
In a clear run of sixty yards in length,  
Opposing forces all alike unheeded !

He halted then, and made a sudden turn,  
As I with breathless haste was following after,  
To the shrill music of the whirring pirn,  
While Sandy shook his sides with bursts of laughter.

In shorter time than I can tell, he took  
Three quivering leaps, distinct and yet successive,  
In vain endeavours to shake off the hook,  
Disclosing to our view his size excessive.

Said Purdie, as he watched these upward bounds,  
“Thon chap’s the heaviest fesh I’ve seen thi’ season :  
If he’s an ounce, he’s five-and-thirty pounds !  
Should ye win him, rejoice ye may with reason !”

I had no time for talk. The cunning Turk,  
Finding he gained no object by this leaping,  
Tried a fresh dodge—that is, a frequent jerk—  
To rid himself of this unpleasant keeping.

*That* wouldn’t do ; so then, as it would seem,  
A last expedient his instinct taught him :  
He let himself glide passive down the stream,  
Into the torrent, where I first had caught him ;

Then made a dash beneath his fav’rite stone,  
And lay as quiet as a petrifaction !  
By which we were effectually done,  
Unless we gained some better point of traction.

“ Be cannie now !—yer line’s o’ single gut !  
Agin’ that rock he’d smash ye in a minnit !  
Ye rin an awfu’ risk o’ being cut !  
Across the stream is th’ only chance to win it.

“ Step in the boat : I’ll wade along the side,  
And pit her over, up, a wee bit higher,  
Then let her down the shingle gently slide,  
Until we’ve come as close as we desire.”

There was no other prospect of success,  
Though, as a system, changing sides is vicious ;  
But I’d no choice except to acquiesce,  
With hopes that Fortune still would be propitious.

To draw the monster from his rocky bield  
I should, of course, be in the right direction ;  
But if the hold within his mouth should yield ?  
*That* was the risk, engrossing my reflection !

His own intrinsic weight, and stream combined  
Would rend the parts about the fly's insertion ;  
So if aback the hook should be inclined,  
'Twas apt to come away by such reversion.

Soon from his resting-place the fish was stirred,  
But scarce to run again had we constrained him,  
When lo ! he's off !—the pliant rod recurred  
To its straight form !—the hook no more detained  
him !

Oh ! how can words describe the sudden start,  
When all that strain from off my arms was taken !  
The sinking of my disappointed heart !  
The deep-drawn breath ! the nerves acutely shaken !

I've no inducement after this to write  
Of “Willow Bush,” where next we had a trial,  
Or “Caller Haugh,” the final cast at night,  
In both of which we underwent denial.

Of further incident I can only say  
That nothing happened in the least engaging,  
For in a trip to Rutherford next day  
A perfect hurricane of wind was raging.

Three weighty fish I lost that afternoon  
In the “Corse Heugh” (I can’t ensure the spelling),  
It is the upper cast, a mile abune  
The fisherman, John Aitken’s, cosie dwelling.

The first shook off. The second up the stream  
Rushed with rapidity, and beat us hollow ;  
Against that stormy tempest ‘twas a dream  
Delusive to expect that boat could follow.

So we were *drowned*; for line of long extent  
Loses elastic power by submersion ;  
The rod’s no help, and fish on mischief bent  
Scatter your tackle with a rude dispersion.

The third, a fish of twenty pounds and more,  
After a gallant fight with us maintaining,  
Was brought in seeming faintness close to shore,  
And we a triumph on the point of gaining.

Just then a perfect somersault he threw  
In shallow water, when he saw the netter,  
And severed with his tail the line in two !  
No knife or razor could have done it better !

Here I conclude, without disguising aught,  
A truthful statement of my last excursion,  
More marked, alas ! with failures than with sport,  
Yet strengthening health, and yielding much diversion.

"Some days," Rob Kerss would say, "they're easy tuik—

There's times wi' my auld hat they wad be sated,  
And ithers when they wadna tak' the huik  
If wi' Makerstoun's leddie it were baited !"

Hail, Rob ! for ever coupled wi' “The Trows,”  
Makerstoun by thy shade will long be haunted !  
A wreath of laurel should adorn thy brows,  
Thou stalwart sire of a race undaunted !

No—*barley* wreath ! if thou couldst have thy will ;  
That potent grain woud make thy ghost more  
frisky ;  
For barley, when submitted to the still,  
Concocts thy fav'rite beverage, that's whisky !

Of thy plain dealing I have heard a tale,  
Which is too racy not to be recorded—  
How thou didst take the wind from out the sail  
Of an aggressor, though he was “my lorded.”

A certain Earl came down one day to fish  
With Rob, who took direction of the coble,  
And he succeeded to his utmost wish,  
For a “keen fesher” was this English noble.

The sporting Earl possessed a pocket flask,  
And ev'ry fish he caught he took "a drappie;"  
But, more's the pity, he forgot to ask  
Rob to go shares, which made the man unhappy.

Rob waited sev'ral times, without reply,  
Though of retaliation he was thinking ;  
For his own "speerit" was as strong and high  
As what his patron by himself was drinking.

At last, without a word he donned his coat,  
Shouldered both oars, and up the bank proceeded,  
Leaving the Earl still seated in the boat,  
Precisely where Rob's skilful help was needed.

This was indeed an aggravating game !  
"What are ye doing, Rob?" the Earl inquired.  
The sturdy answer was, "I'se ganging hame."  
"What for? it's early yet; you can't be tired."

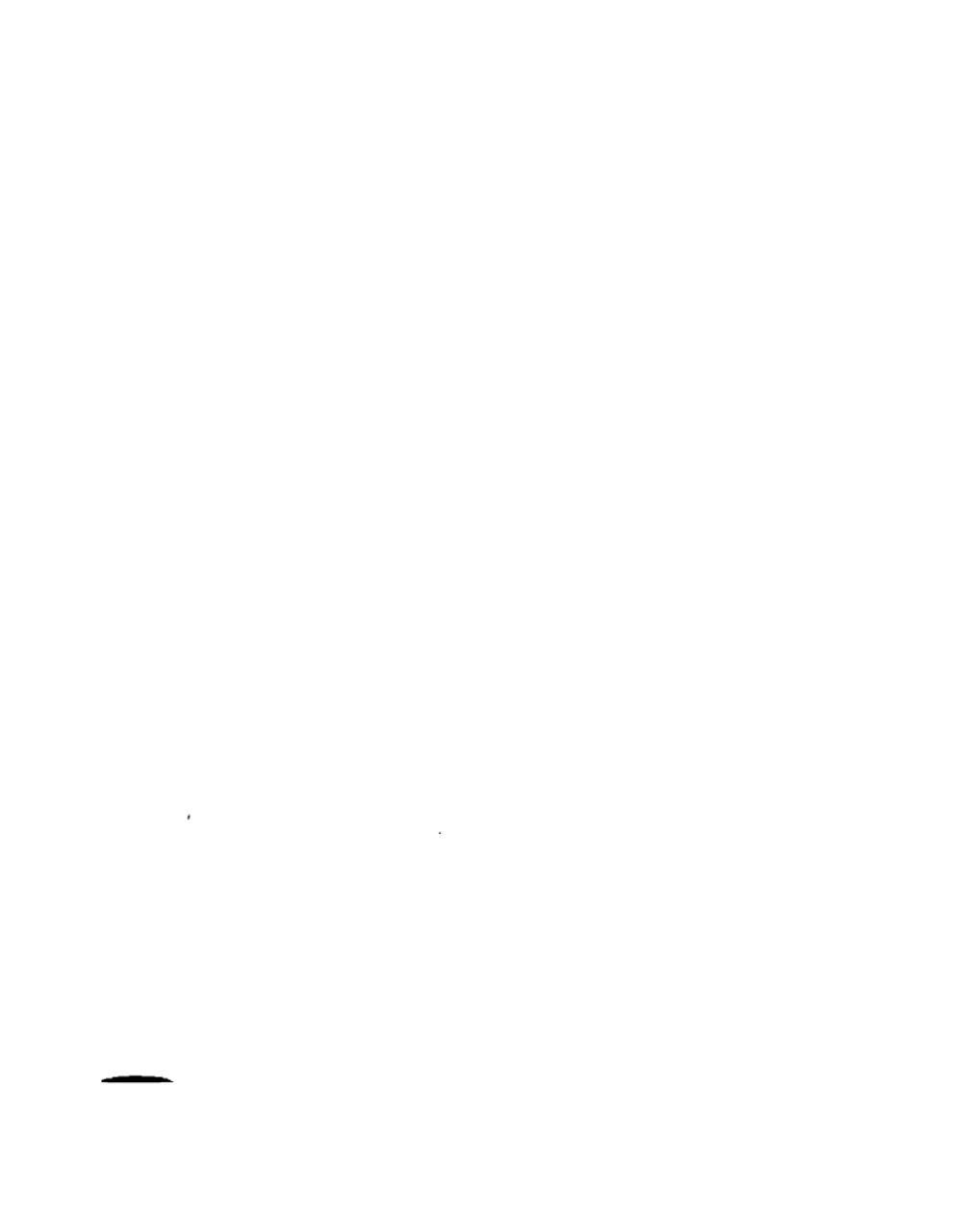
“Na, I’se no wearie : that ye maunna think :  
I’ll do to ye as ye’ve dune to anither ;  
For they who as companions wunna drink,  
By the same rule maun niver fesh thegither !”



FINIS.



KELSO:  
PRINTED BY RUTHERFORD & CRAIG.







T H E

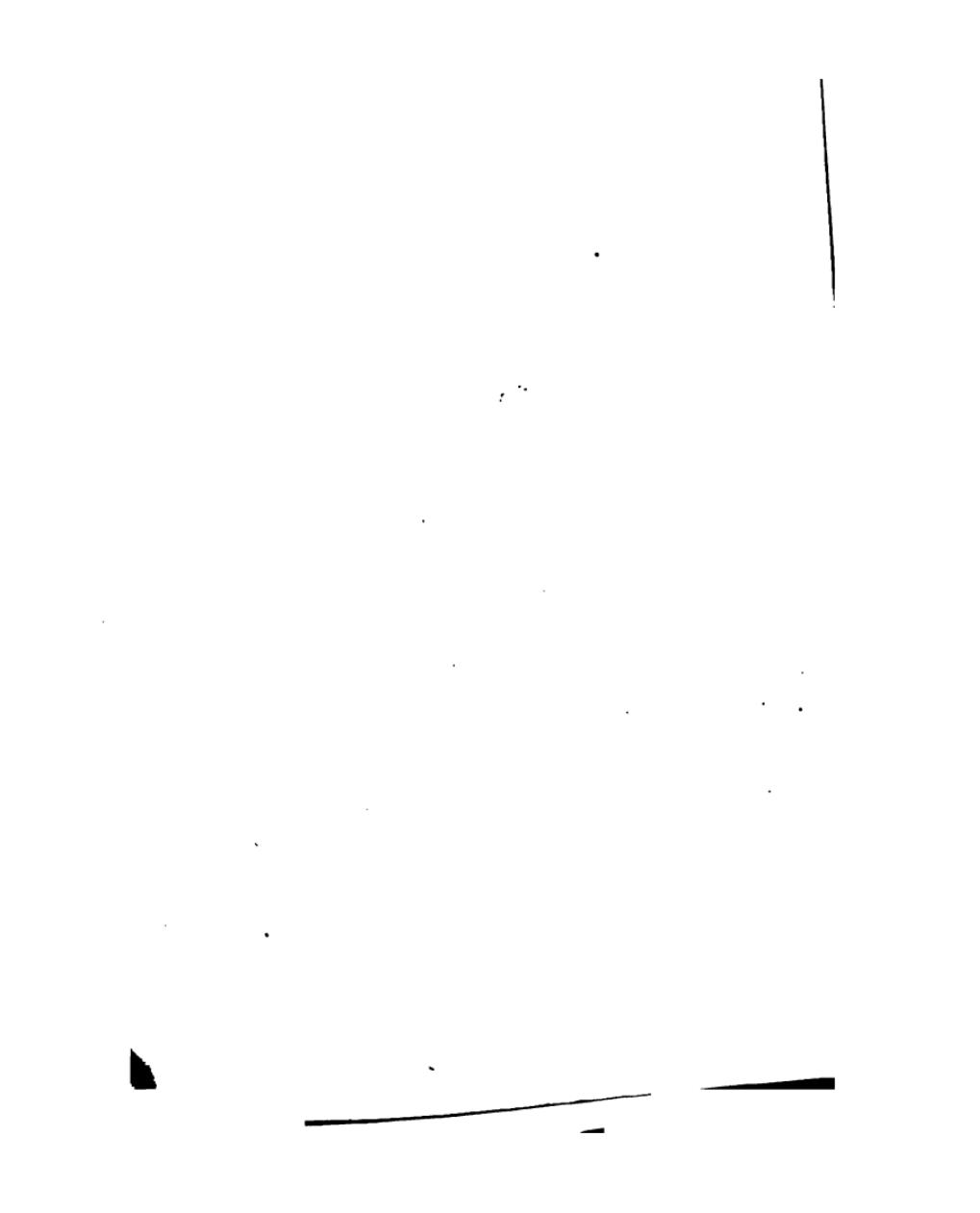
“*Lay of the East Angler.*”

C A N T O I I I.

K E L S O :  
PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION  
BY RUTHERFURD & CRAIG.  
1874.







T H E

“*Lay of the Last Angler.*”

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C A N T O I I I



K E L S O :  
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1874.



TO THE  
*Earl and Countess of Hinnoull,*  
TO WHOSE GREAT KINDNESS AND REPEATED  
HOSPITALITY  
*The Author*  
WAS INDEBTED FOR MUCH OF THE RECREATION  
HEREIN RELATED,  
*These Lines*  
ARE WITH MUCH GRATITUDE INSCRIBED.



## “THE LAY OF THE LAST ANGLER.”

### CANTO III.

 FEAR my literary friends  
Will think my verse too far extends,  
If I prolong its present span to  
The writing of another canto.  
But if I've incidents to tell,  
The rhyming suits my fancy well ;  
And you'll admit 'tis harmless pleasure  
Thus to employ some hours of leisure—  
So, without preface, let me state  
Some angling which I had of late.  
Now, first, I'll gratefully record  
Strath-Earn, and Dupplin's genial lord,

Who sent a kindly invitation  
To visit him in my vacation,  
And help him with the rod to switch  
What he denotes “his poor old ditch,”  
“Which swarmed just then with fishy stuff.”  
Droll terms! but hardly fair enough  
To give a river like the Earn,  
With salmon filled at every turn.  
For instance, one October past,  
Kinnoull, from off a single cast,  
Took one day eight, and nine the second,  
Which must good quantity be reckoned,  
If note be made of time and place,  
Each somewhat circumscribed in space.  
Through Dupplin, then, the Earn proceeds,  
Past wooded hills and verdant meads,  
Till, below Perth, it joins the Tay,  
Which yields the heaviest fish, they say,  
Of any river in the north.  
(The boast must go for what it's worth.)

I've some idea the saying's true,  
But Earn can hold its monsters too ;  
I'd solid proof of this last autumn,  
Because I actually caught 'em !  
The haugh's so flat, this water's flow  
Is somewhat tortuous and slow ;  
And thus the current seems to sleep  
In sundry pools both wide and deep.  
In these the largest salmon lie,  
And rise, but *not* to take the fly.  
They'll throw themselves about in sport  
As if on travelling they thought,  
And splash as listlessly they go  
Back to the hidden depths below—  
Too far, perhaps, to see the lure,  
For they *won't take*—of this be sure ;  
'Tis only when the water's thinner  
That you can hope to be a winner.  
But at the head of such a place  
There's usually some little space

Where rocky bank or jutting stone  
Across the water's edge is thrown,  
Whereby the stream's impeded course  
Is fretted into greater force ;  
Raises some waves, and curls around  
The point with eddying rebound.  
Good brother ! fish that throat with care,  
Methinks you'll get an offer there !

Upon the twentieth of September,  
In seventy-two, if I remember,  
'Twas such a cast I laid my fly on,  
When, with a rush like savage lion,  
A lordly salmon seized the hook,  
And found himself for once “ mistook.”  
His rise was of no common kind,  
Which leaves a circling wave behind ;  
But so intent was he on slaughter,  
He ploughed full length above the water,  
And struck as if he'd used a bludgeon,  
Or like a pike which bolts a gudgeon !

Soon as I felt my hold secure, he  
Lashed himself into downright fury ;  
Ran out—as hard as he could go,  
Straight as an arrow from a bow—  
Some sixty yards of line or more,  
Until he neared the farther shore :  
Then leapt aloft with wild contortions,  
Which showed his size and grand proportions,  
And, turning, sped as swiftly back  
To try me on the other tack.  
"Hullo !" says Science, " that's bucolic,  
A missile's line is parabolic ;  
Your simile's inclined to be  
More what we call hyperbole—  
That is, in what you here relate  
You're tempted to exaggerate."  
Oh, bosh ! your strictures are too fine,  
They don't apply to reel and line —  
My words are never meant to be  
Discussed by dry philosophy.

Don't pester me with hydrostatics,  
Or lines and curves of mathematics !  
I write for brothers of the angle,  
Who with my phrases will not wrangle,  
If I can make them understand  
How I'd a heavy fish on hand—  
Not yet *in* hand—he got away !  
To come again another day.  
Just wait, and I shall prove to you  
That this was literally true.  
But to my tale : when he leapt out,  
And showed his form, so huge and stout,  
Said Irvine—noticing this bounce—  
“He's thirty pound if he's an ounce !”  
Such calculation's “varra kittle,”  
’Twas in this case five pound *too little* ;  
But I'm too soon at this to book him,  
“First *catch* your hare before you cook him.”  
Who's Irvine ? Well—the question's fair ;  
He's not a phantom of thin air,

But a grand specimen of a man  
From district of the Athol clan ;  
In short, a native of Dunkeld,  
Who has for years at Dupplin held  
The post of fisherman and keeper,  
Functions in which he's not a sleeper.  
I've little doubt his game-ness serves  
To keep intact Kinnoull's preserves ;  
And, as for fishing, he's complete—  
In sporting language, "bad to beat :"  
At tying flies a perfect master,  
Nor less efficient as a caster ;  
His hand and eye are both so quick,  
That he's unfailing with the cleik ;  
And, lastly, he's supremely skilled  
In curing salmon when they're killed ;  
Though mostly, when we yield to fate,  
We think a *cure* comes rather late !  
'Twas Irvine, then, who watched the duel  
'Twixt me and this vivacious jewel.

This salmo-salar (here's apology  
For using terms in ichthyology ;  
That's the Linnæan name, you see,  
For this kind of salmonidæ.)  
Ten or twelve minutes swiftly glided  
Before this contest was decided.  
Twice did I coax him to the side  
In hope the cleik might be applied ;  
As often he regained the pool,  
Meaning “ No—thanks—I'm not a fool.”  
Then rushed at last with vig'rous force  
To the far limits of the course—  
Swagged heavily—then—all was slack !  
The line came limp and crumpling back ;  
The rod had lost its graceful bend,  
And pointed sky-ward with its end !  
In short, the enemy had retreated,  
Leaving us utterly defeated !  
But how about the tackle, pray ?  
Some anxious fisherman may say ;

All right—hook sound, and gut un-“raxed,”  
Much as its tension had been taxed.  
Doubtless the hold had given way  
Under such weight and lengthened play.  
The only loss we had sustained  
Was—*victory*—which the salmon gained !  
To paint my feeling words would fail,  
So over that we'll draw a veil.

Now, let my story be transferred  
Thence to September twenty-third,  
And side of river be reversed  
From that which I described at first.  
Bear, too, in mind this other quarter  
Was two streams *higher up* the water :  
That cast was called the “Lower Buchan”  
(In case you'd like to try your luck on) ;  
But this as “Wilkinson” is known,  
Because a man so named was thrown  
Or tumbled in, and nearly paid  
His life for the mistake he made.

14. "THE LAY OF THE LAST ANGLER."

It is a pleasant, lively cast,  
And far more fruity than the last :  
There's more decline ; the stream is stronger ;  
The cast considerably longer :  
The depth enough, but not profound,  
And plenty of good lying ground.  
The run's on eastern side, but west  
For throw and landing is the best.  
It shallows there upon a gravel  
On which 'tis excellent to travel :  
You can advance or else retreat  
Without e'en wetting of your feet,  
Though wading boots I always wear  
For each emergence to prepare.  
Here I was fishing at my ease  
While paddling scarcely to the knees ;  
The fly across the run had passed  
Just ready for another cast,  
When 'twas arrested by a draw  
From something with capacious maw !

It was a sober, honest rise,  
Not one to take you by surprise ;  
But quiet, dignified, yet bold,  
Which promised a retentive hold.  
Now, when this fish discover'd plainer  
The character of his retainer,  
He wasn't long in putting steam on,  
But rushed away like any demon—  
Swimming up stream at Derby rate,  
Though handicapped to carry weight !—  
Namely, the pressure, somewhat drastic,  
Of tightened line and rod elastic ;  
Directed by the angler's muscle,  
Without impatient haste or bustle.  
His pace, indeed, gave me relief—  
'Twas sure to bring him soon to grief.  
Once he turned over on his side,  
When we with wonderment descried  
His close resemblance to the first,  
Which from our toils had bravely burst.

Now, when he'd run sufficient riot,  
He seemed contented to be quiet,  
And drifted till we saw him wallow  
Half out of water, where 'twas shallow.  
Then in quick time we had him stranded,  
Secured by cleik, and safely landed !  
Here note that when a salmon's bulky,  
He tires you most by turning sulky ;  
He'll pull unceasingly like fun  
While lying quiet in the run ;  
But in a race he courts his death  
By swimming till he's out of breath,  
And yields with little opposition  
Through temporary inanition.  
Perhaps by dint of some persuasion  
You may improve that good occasion,  
But if you dawdle at the chance,  
He'll lead you off another dance.  
Now, let us pause, and respite snatch,  
To sing the celebrated *catch*.

“A boat, a boat unto the Ferry ;  
For we’re come hither to be merry ; }  
To laugh and quaff and drink old sherry !” }  
Let’s rest awhile—sit down and lunch  
Off sav’ry meat and goodly hunch }  
Of household bread ; and while we munch,  
Let’s tap the flask and taste a drappie  
“To future calls from such a chappie !”  
The “fesh” on *terra firma* laid,  
Our next step is to have him weighed ;  
Our balances are quickly found,  
Both ranging up to thirty pound ; .  
But such a fish laughs them to scorn—  
Each spring beyond its mark is borne !  
What’s to be done ? We soon decide ;  
To an oak branch together tied  
The balances combine their strength,  
And *salmo* *salar*’s weighed at length,  
Marking the sum, as I’m alive,  
To stand at thirty pounds and five !

That was exactly nine pounds more  
Than ever I had reached before.

Next of his mouth I made inspection  
(No need of scalpel or dissection),  
Because my search was only centered  
Upon the spot the hook had entered.  
The wound was in the *left* “os malar”  
Or cheek-bone of this *salmo* *salar*.  
But, lo ! we found *another* rent  
On the *right* jaw, which surely meant  
That he’d been hooked some recent day,  
And from the hold had broke away.  
We’ll call an inquest on the spot,  
Whether these facts suffice or not  
Presumptive evidence to be  
Of personal identity.  
Now, jury, what’s your verdict, pray ?  
Irvine and I depone, and say,  
’Twas the same fish we twice had on ;  
The foreman says, “Agreed *nem.-con.*”

I'd further luck that day and plenty,  
We took another fish of twenty—  
One of elev'n, or thereabout,  
And finally a good sea trout.  
But this success was distanced far  
By one “great fesher,” Lord C. Kerr;  
At separate times he took of late  
A forty-three, and forty-eight !  
He's first—I'm second—next to me  
Comes our kind host with thirty-three.  
(I only wish, with all my soul,  
That he was highest on the poll !)  
But this is proof, with scores returned,  
What weight in this “old ditch” is *earn-ed* !

Here 'tis as well to mention all  
The terms which are conventional  
For Scottish streams :—The largest sort are  
*Rivers* of course ; then comes *a water*—  
As Allan, Leader, Eden, May—  
Where trout, not salmon, are our prey ;

The smallest stream is called in turn,  
Not rivulet or brook, but *burn*.  
Well ! we'd last year such constant flood  
That rivers, waters, burns, ran mud ;  
One day was wet—the next day wetter !  
The third or fourth were scarcely better.  
'Twas an “embarras de richesse,”  
Which gave poor anglers much distress.  
We were so often disappointed  
With idle days and rods disjointed—  
I don't mean actual dislocation,  
But sickened with their “long vacation ;”  
Or, if we ventured on a trial,  
'Twas mostly to incur denial ;  
For, till the water be in fettle,  
The salmon neither take nor settle.  
During three weeks I'd five, no more—  
A very miserable score !  
    But not all happiness depends  
On fishing, when you've cordial friends.

And at Pavilion it is hard  
Of happiness to be debarred,  
Where host and hostess do their best  
To entertain each welcome guest,  
Where kindly smile and greeting warm  
Have their unutterable charm.  
If “she won’t fish,” we plan some walk,  
Enlivening our stroll with talk :  
Through Darnick take a pleasant turn  
To call on Kerrs at Huntly Burn ;  
Or to Melrose prolong our way,  
Inspect the Abbey’s ruin grey,  
And loiter homeward in the gloaming,  
By Tweed’s sonorous waters roaming.  
Perhaps if we’re insured from wet  
A party starts in waggonette,  
And carries some amusing chat on  
As we skirt Leader foot and Gatton ;  
Look down on Tweed’s romantic tide  
By Ravenswood and Bemersyde—

Surveying in continual change  
The triple peaks of Eildon's range,  
Till we descend on Dryburgh's fane  
'Mid Buchan's beauteous domain.  
There—in dilapidated aisle,  
Where ivy creeps and roses smile,  
Embalmed with Britain's deep affection  
(Until the general Resurrection,  
When all will meet their final doom—)  
Lie the remains, in peaceful tomb,  
Of him who blazoned Scottish story  
With rays of never-dying glory.  
No local feature, peak, or vale,  
But echoes back some wondrous tale ;  
Some legend by his magic pen  
Revived to charm his fellow-men.  
He pictures in his very name  
The land he raised to world-wide fame :  
Each eye is dimmed, each voice must falter,  
As we behold thy grave, Sir Walter !

Enough ! We pass another spot,  
Where once it was my favoured lot  
With wife and family to dwell ;  
And oh ! we loved those quarters well !—  
The Holmes ; an angler's home indeed !  
Perched on the very verge of Tweed,  
And resting in a maze of wood  
On rocky bank above the flood.  
No language can indeed express  
The beauty of that sweet recess—  
Adorned with many a climbing flower,  
In summer 'tis a perfect bower.  
'Tis tenanted by Colonel Forbes,  
Whom salmo-mania quite absorbs.  
Of Dryburgh water he's dictator,  
As formerly was Admiral Cator ;  
And here, with his agreeable wife,  
He spends some portion of his life—  
Dispensing hospitable cheer  
To numerous friends both far and near.

— THE DAY OF THE LAST ANNUAL —

This is the limit of our time  
We call and have some rest in fire—  
A quietness quite at Eildon Hill  
Or one abridged by the mount.  
There we maintain a twelve-mile circuit  
By running back to all the fitter  
But I should err to make omission  
Of our pedestrian expedition,  
Somewhat ambitious, I confess,  
But issuing in complete success.  
It was to scale the central summit  
Of Eildon, could we overcome it;  
Its height in feet may trifling sound,  
Yet dominates the country round :  
"Tis thirteen hundred eighty-three  
Above the level of the sea ;  
Yet *that* to climb sufficient grade is  
For gentry, specially for ladies.  
The persons who this trip had chosen  
Numbered exactly half-a-dozen,

And as we differed about courses,  
We settled to divide our forces.  
On Lady Buchan and our hostess  
In justice I must lay the most stress,  
Because I was their pioneer  
This hilly obstacle to clear.  
I chose an old and easy track  
As far as might be up the slack ;  
But Captain Stirling took a new 'un,  
With Lord Cardross and Mary Hughan ;  
Despised all precedents, and went  
Straight up the hill's abrupt ascent ;  
Still youthful blood must win the day,  
So at the summit first came they.  
Yet we were really close behind,  
Though not to hurrying inclined,  
Both matrons following my lead  
With nimble steps, as all agreed.

When on the top we took our stand,  
The scene was positively grand—

Three counties in a ring complete  
Lay as a map beneath our feet.  
Towards the east our bird's-eye view  
Was melted into hazy blue.  
But every hill showed clear and well,  
From Cheviot to Carter Fell,  
And sunlight burnished all we saw  
'Twixt Lammiermuir and Ruberslaw.  
*That* was for me a *setting* sun !  
I mean my climbing days are done :  
At sixty-five, when I reflect,  
To mount these heights I can't expect.

That autumn was my very worst one,  
Yet I'd adventures at Makerstoun—  
I'd made acquaintance with George Wright,  
And put him down in black and white  
As fisherman who helped me once  
In work at which I proved a dunce—  
That was, to play a prince of kippers  
Between Laird's east and southern Clippers.

Now, I went under his tuition  
To try a lower expedition ;  
The lower water—not inferior—  
'Tis hard to say which is superior,  
But lower in the river's course,  
Which fact gude Geordie will endorse.  
To this the following casts belong  
(They're hard to introduce in song— }  
Forgive me, Wright, if I am wrong !) :— }  
Laird's Cast, the Elshie Stream, and Shot,  
Red-stane, par excellence *the spot* !  
Side-straike, the Doors (too often shut, }  
As crafty fish are prone to cut }  
Both your acquaintance and your gut !) }  
The Nether-heads—(keep *your heads cool*)—  
Willie's Owerfa', and Killmouth Pool.  
These five last cataracts descend  
Through walls of rock from end to end ;  
They're known conjointly as *The Trows*  
(Pronounced as if you're saying "vows.")

But meaning “Troughs”—you’d ne’er attain  
The reason why, so I’ll explain.  
Langsyne a pre-historic man  
Devised a raft of novel plan ;  
He took two troughs for feeding cattle,  
Joined them with nails or rope or wattle,  
And bevelled them, one end to be  
In shape just like our letter V.  
Then, if the stream were small and low  
(Else it were suicide to go),  
And poachers meant for salmon slaughter,  
Either to “sun” or “burn” the water ;  
The leisterer stood with legs a-straddle  
Across this queerish sort of saddle,  
And when a luckless fish was seen,  
He speared it through the space between—  
That is, between himself and point  
At which the timbers were conjoint.  
When once th’ adventurer was a-float  
In this precarious kind of boat,

'Tis difficult to form a notion  
What power he had of locomotion.  
Doubtless, with ropes they kept him steady  
While he to strike the fish was ready ;  
If he capsized, 'twere well that he  
Should, like a duck, amphibious be.  
But how they managed the flotation  
Don't ask of me an explanation ;  
I only have defined the *word*,  
As from "auld feskers" I have heard.  
I tell the tale as told to me—  
Get "Stoddart's Angler" and you'll see ;  
He's great authority (they tell so)  
About the neighbourhood of Kelso.

I fear, kind reader, you're aghast  
At this long preface to a cast—  
So picture us afloat again  
About the region of "The Stane."  
'Tis deep and tranquil in itself,  
But glides at last across the shelf

Of rocks, which makes the water break  
In furious torrent to the “Straik.”  
Now, when we’re making preparation,  
We hold the following conversation :—  
“ George, is there any chance to-day ? ”  
“ Weel, reelly, Sir, I canna say,  
“ She’s awfu’ beg—juist fully higher  
“ Than I’d expect—and yet we’ll try her.  
“ Maybe we’ll hap on ane or twae ;  
“ Yell please select a silver grey,  
“ A lairgish huik, and fesh it steady  
“ Across the sweep o’ thonder eddy ;  
“ If there’s a saumon to be ta’en,  
“ You’ll have him here about the stane ;  
“ Bring the huik round—I’m on the watch—  
“ Aye ! that’s the spot preeesely.” Plotch !  
A plunge ! “ I have him ! prophet true !  
“ Now, George, instruct me what to do—  
“ I never fished the cast before—  
“ So help me with advice once more.”

"Aye ! now be canny—coax him on—  
"Let him swim up, or else he's gone ;  
"Lay no more stress upon yer line  
"Than juist to haud him licht and fine.  
"If he'd but work some yards a-heid,  
"I'd reckon him as gude as deid;  
"But I can see the crafty vill'in  
"To leave the run is far from willin' ;  
"He's makin' for the rocky ledge,  
"Which cuts the current like a wedge ;  
"The stream's that strong in thonder quarter,  
"Twill force him doun the broken water ;  
"If we bide here, he'll beat us hollow—  
"We'll ha'e to leave the boat and follow.  
"Ye'd better lend the rod to me ;  
"The wadin's difficult, ye see."  
I yield it with a nervous shiver,  
And George is thigh-deep in the river !  
Manceuvring with consummate art,  
For every step he knows by heart.

Now, Geordie's mate was looking on,  
Who moored the coble to a stone—  
Then seized the net, and, like a bird,  
He flitted off with without a word ;  
And I in solitary state  
Was left to gaze or meditate !  
The water was so deep and dark  
That wading was beyond a lark,  
So I'd no choice but climb the bank—  
Steep, greasy, and with brushwood rank.  
With breathless haste the top was won,  
Whence I could learn what Wright had done ;  
Ere this he had regained the shore,  
And got abreast the fish once more :  
I saw the salmon downward dashing,  
Past boulders borne, 'mid breakers splashing,  
And knew by all that rush and rattle  
That George was still engaged in battle.  
Then cautiously, with judgment fine,  
I watched him reeling up his line ;

I saw the supple rod well arched  
As Wright to victory onward marched,  
Working the fish, and keeping her face  
(For 'twas a baggit) on the surface ;  
If she got down 'twould be a wonder  
But what she'd cut the line asunder.  
At this conjuncture of the fight  
Both combatants were lost to sight ;  
Wright passed behind a grassy mound,  
Which hid him by its rising ground.  
I soon rejoined him, and espied  
The salmon lying on its side ;  
And Geordie, radiant with delight,  
But sweatin' sair, and breathless quite.  
Mark Johnson had just done his duty  
By netting this pugnacious beauty.  
It *was* a beauty, newly run,  
And weighed exactly "aichteen pun'."  
" Bravo ! my hearties ! what a race !  
" She took you down a fearful pace !

“This dangerous water at Makerstoun  
Is really quite enough to burst one.”  
Says Wright, while mopping face and brows,  
“Aye ! that’s a sample o’ the Trows !  
“A’ve seen that trick wi’ mony a score,  
“But ne’er in sich a spate before ;  
“Twas juist a meeracle to get her—  
“She’s gi’en me a tremandgeous sweater ;  
“I was that keen, ye’ll oonderstand,  
“To bring *your* saumon safe to land.”  
Good courteous George ! that *mine* to call,  
Which to *his* skill alone could fall !  
The proverb says “There’s mony a slip  
Which happens ‘twixt the cup and lip :”  
So, with our sport, there’s many a break  
Betwixt the hooking and the take.  
Had I essayed what he had won,  
Then I, not salmon, had been done.  
Later, a brother fish we got—  
Either in Elshie or the Shot ;

Its capture calls for no remark.  
Then we fished on in vain till dark.  
But George declared (to keep me plucky) :  
“A’s sure ye’ve been ooncommon lucky ;  
“For thirty year I canna mind  
“A case occurring o’ the kind,  
“When saumon could be got to rise  
“In water sich a monstrous size.  
“There’s Maister Malcolm had a blank  
(“He’s watching us frae thonder bank.)  
“Ye’ll ken the chance is unco’ bad,  
“When *he* finds nane are to be had.”  
To further hopes how then aspire ?  
Next time I went, the Tweed was *higher* !  
Wright met me, as in duty bound,  
But minus wading boots was found.  
A gentle hint, I must confess,  
Not to anticipate success.  
‘Twas clear, at least, we’d no resource  
But to Red-stane to have recourse.

Then George was punished with severity  
For *bootless* actions of temerity.  
I scarce had made a dozen throws  
Before a noble salmon rose !  
'Twas just upon the magic spot  
Where we the previous fish had got,  
And when 'twas hooked, it downward burst,  
After the example of the first.  
So Wright, to follow it, must dip  
In water nearly to his hip !  
He took the ducking like a stoic,  
Enduring it with pluck heroic—  
And, after many a plunge and flounder,  
Landed a two-and-twenty pounder :  
Went home and got his wet breeks undone—  
Then packed the salmon off for London.  
Now, here was proof without denial  
That chances sometimes yield to trial.  
What were the odds ? George Wright would say  
Full thirty years against a day—

That is, by multiplying done,  
All but ten thousand days to one :  
Such odds against a racing steed  
Would make him a “dark horse” indeed !  
Yet “Angler” won the “Trial Stakes”  
From “Salmo-Salar” in the Straiks !

That precious Stane holds fish in plenty.  
Next day we landed one of twenty :  
Then came a perfect hurricane  
Of wind and hail and sleety rain—  
It conquered us—we homeward wended,  
And so that autumn’s fishing ended.

Then, here’s adieu to Seventy-two—  
The next year found us more to do ;  
It was for angling far the best  
That men remember—that’s confessed.  
I had two outings : each was short,  
But both their share of booty brought.  
September gave me just a week  
In which for finny prey to seek.

When I went up to Scotland this  
Year I had a very bad time  
I had to go up the River Tweed  
To get at some of the two fish.  
I had dinner with a neighbour  
And he told me about the river salmon.  
He said it took them half an hour  
Through the river fought with all the power  
That not even tackle would permit.  
In some which ended I will admit  
Some others, no, were large in size,  
Though nothing to create surprise.

But the great ruck of fish came on  
When back to London I had gone;  
There had been weeks of constant wet,  
With no obstructions from the net.  
Hence, Tweed in every stream and pool  
Of salmon was completely full,  
And when it fell to proper ply,  
They were like fury at the fly.

Now, there are "giants in the land"—  
Men who have rivers at command,  
Live on their banks, possess their streams,  
And realize an angler's dreams.  
They watch the water's hourly state,  
And for the nick of time can wait,  
Then take the lion's share of prey,  
"Crême de la crême," as Frenchmen say.  
*Imprimis*, there's his Grace of Floors,  
Who makes to Norway annual tours.  
I quote him *first*, with full reliance,  
For ownership, and angling science—  
Although this year his Grace's cook  
The ducal prize of salmon took ;  
In one day landing just a score  
(Three hundred, forty pounds, or more !)  
And yet the *chef*, I've since been told,  
Not first, but second, place must hold.  
He by a Griffin was outdone,  
Who took in number twenty-one,

And weight, three hundred fifty-two—  
Such marvels are achieved by few !  
Then, not to mention two were treason,  
*Elite* of Kelso in “the season :”  
Malcolm, and Alfred Denison,  
Who weighs his captures by the *Ton* !  
He owns *two* waters—nothing less—  
One on the Tweed, the other Ness.

But casuals, too, obtained their fun  
During this grand October run.  
Clanwilliam roused the Birgham shore  
By lugging out a forty-four ;  
And two more sporting names I'll mention,  
Whose great achievements claim attention :  
Charles Barrington's and Harry Grey's,  
Who on Floors water in three days  
Found, when their booty they had counted,  
That it to ninety-three amounted !  
While Learmonth's party, too, could speak  
Of near a hundred in the week.

Then Brunlees, civil engineer  
(Salmon would say *uncivil* here !)  
Took in a day, from Sprouston Dub,  
Enough to fill a brewer's tub.  
(*Vat* it should be, if that were rhyme,  
But *tub* must do to save me time.)  
I think his number was thirteen,  
But of a size that's seldom seen.  
Oh ! cruel Dub ! I've thrice been there  
Without one single breath of air—  
A nipping frost, or brilliant sun—  
In short, when nothing could be done ;  
Whereas a goodly breeze is wanted  
To raise the fish by which it's haunted.  
Thus disappointed, one must say,  
Let's hope for luck some other day.  
*Palman qui meruere, ferant—*  
*De ceteris, dum spirant sperant.*  
'Tis good to quote th' above successes,  
Though best to share them, one confesses ;

Such prizes were denied to me.  
Though quite contented I should be.  
I got my sixty in the season.  
And that's enough in sober reason.  
The average, too, of twenty-eight  
Was of no despicable weight ;  
By balance proved, and duly counted,  
To twenty-one it just amounted.

I've one more incident to tell  
Ere to my friends I say farewell !  
"Twas at Makerstoun's upper water—  
Of which I'm now to be reporter ;  
Mark Johnson, too, the henchman's name,  
Who played the following risky game :—  
Two casts we tried of noted rank—  
"The Orchard Stream" and "Willie's Bank,"  
In each a salmon we had got ;  
Next we essayed the adjacent spot,  
Rejoicing in the name "Dark Shore,"  
Where we'd two offers, but no more.

Thence to “South Clippers” we descended,  
On which for sport we much depended.  
The channel here is rock throughout,  
And, as for boat, you go without ;  
The coble you are forced to strand,  
And, in a certain sense, you land—  
That is, you wade to reach some rocks  
Cleft into seams, and holes, and blocks ;  
‘Mid which you splash and plodge your way  
To pools wherein the salmon stay.  
At last you cross a kind of sluice,  
Which rushes like the very deuce—  
The water’s about shoulder deep,  
But no man on his legs could keep ;  
For as the fall is sharp, of course  
The stream’s proportionate in force.  
The length is scarce a dozen paces,  
When, with a sudden curve, it races  
Back to the river, which, in fact,  
Is there a foaming cataract.

Here we had fished the cast in vain,  
And turned, our cable to regain—  
So must re-cross this sluicy thing  
By a wide step or easy spring.  
Mark, with my rod, was first to jump—  
But slipping, with an awful thump,  
Fell on his elbow 'gainst the rock,  
And lost his senses from the shock.  
With him went down my rod, alas !  
And snapt its top in two like glass.  
“ Mark, are you hurt ? ” I quickly cry,  
But the poor lad gave no reply ;  
Then, horror-struck, I saw him glide  
Into that swift relentless tide !  
The angry torrent whirled him round,  
He seemed as one already drowned.  
With head submerged and limbs contracted  
(The piteous sight drove me distracted),  
Nor yet one effort life to save  
From an impending watery grave !

A few feet further thus conveyed,  
He would be past all human aid—  
Amid those seething torrents hurled  
From hence into an unseen world !  
What could I do ?—there's one chance yet—  
How, if I try the landing-net ?  
Quicker than thought I made a cast  
Ere yet the narrow stream was passed,  
Entangling by a lucky swoop  
One leg within the iron hoop !  
Arrested thus, the boatman soon  
Recovered from his death-like swoon,  
Above the fluid raised his head,  
And tried to quit his “water bed”—  
Lifted both hands to grasp the shore,  
And, like a seal, emerged once more.  
His arms its flappers much resembled  
As he crawled out, and gasped, and trembled !  
The cold ablution helped a bit  
No doubt to cure his fainting fit ;

Now can the bark continue further.  
It would have been a case of numbers.  
Many would have lied against our wishes,  
And have become the tool for fishes!  
After that plunge and heavy skelp,  
A drain affords the readiest help,  
And next a thorough change was needed,  
So homeward Mark forthwith proceeded;  
(The house was fortunately near.)  
Meanwhile I mend the broken gear.  
Then, ere the evening light was spent,  
Back to the Orchard Stream we went,  
Which yielded fishy fruit in plenty—  
Two minnows, a seventeen, and twenty.

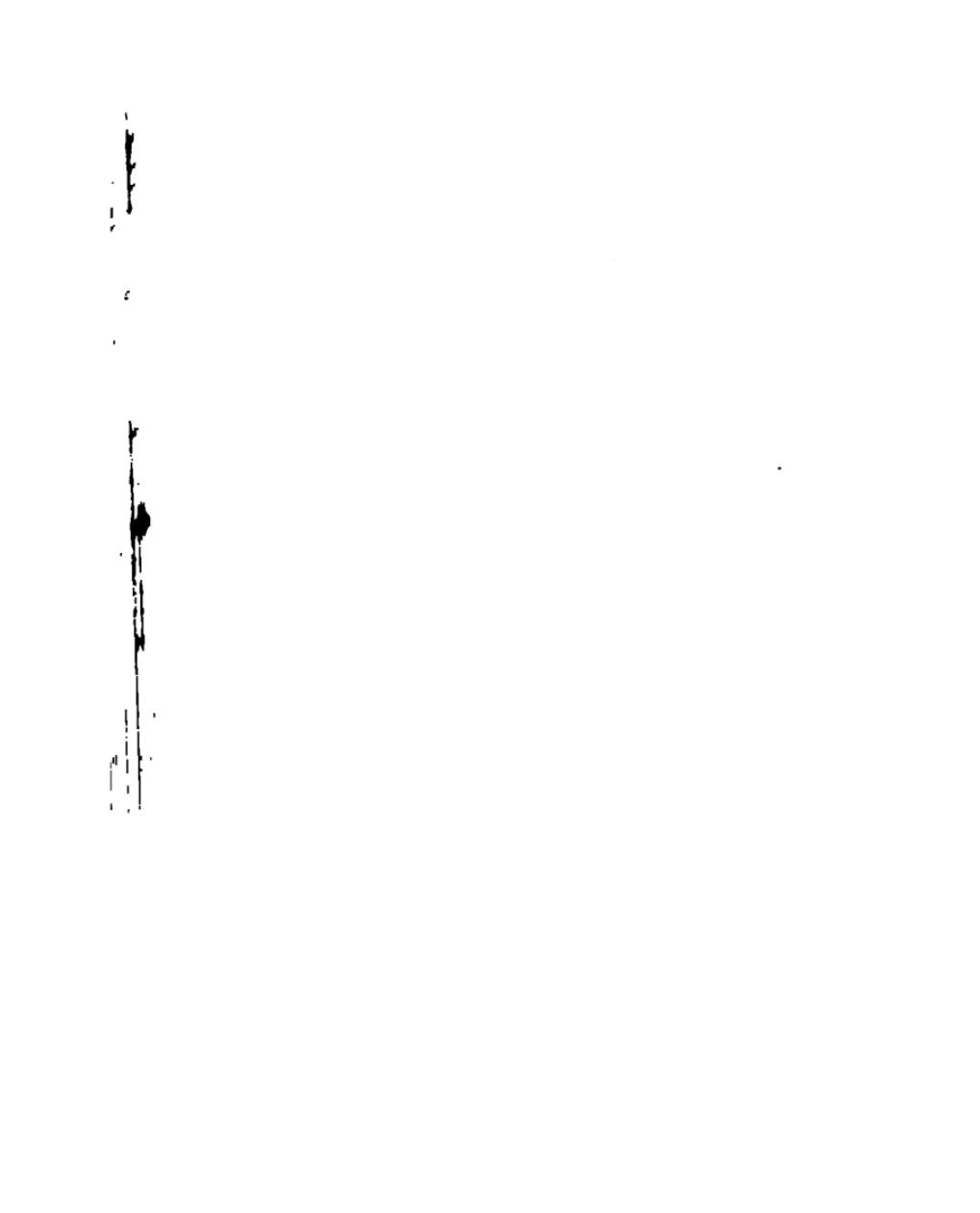
I must conclude this long narration  
With words of simple lamentation—  
Not for the loss of constant quarters,  
From whence I've fished Makerstoun waters,  
Though visitors could scarce forget  
Such an occasion of regret —

But in deep sympathy with friends,  
Whose genuine kindness never ends—  
Who've won esteem and warm affection  
From every neighbour and connexion.  
Their name's indeed a household word  
Where'er the Border tongue is heard—  
The Scotts, of Anerum's ancient hall,  
Of which this autumn saw the fall.  
I was well-nigh their latest guest  
If facts by figures are expressed ;  
Scarcely four days in truth had flown  
Since I had crossed its threshhold stone,  
When hungry flames enwrapped it round,  
And burnt it to the very ground !  
All gone ! past hope of restoration—  
Ruins, and utter desolation !  
Insurances can meet, 'tis true,  
The losses in a monied view,  
And architects design a mansion  
Of more convenience or expansion.

But how can modern art retrace  
The time-worn features of a place ?  
Wainscots and stairs of solid oak,  
Blackened with age, and use, and smoke ?  
With armoury, in mosses found,  
Of Ancrum moor and neighbouring ground,  
Two-handed swords and breastplates dinted  
By bullet, bolt, or blows unstinted ;  
Pikes, claymores, morions, with scars  
Of death-wounds in our Border wars ?  
The door, with ponderous bar and socket,  
Devised in olden times to lock it,  
But needless when 'twas opened wide  
From morning's dawn till eventide  
To welcome every coming guest,  
Who sought for shelter, food, or rest ?  
Farewell ! dear venerable pile,  
Which o'er the landscape seemed to smile,  
Conspicuous in grand sobriety,  
'Mid giant trees of much variety,

And monarch of its wooded height,  
All mellowed with autumnal light !  
Farewell ! once more I say with pain,  
We ne'er shall see its like again !—  
Yet its good owner has the will  
That it should be *his* Ancrum still—  
Renewed to form the ancestral home  
Of generations yet to come.  
May he the pious wish complete  
To reconstruct his country seat,  
And a fresh residence be found  
To occupy the ancient ground ;  
Like Phoenix, rising from the pyre,  
Which erst consumed its dying sire !

FINIS.





1

2

3

4

5











THE  
LAY OF THE EAST ANGLER."

CANTO IV.

I. The Angler's Lament.  
II. A Dirge.  
III. Compensation.

KELSO:  
PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION  
BY RUTHERFORD & CRAIG.  
1881.

—





THE  
‘*Bay of the East Angler.*’

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CANTO IV.

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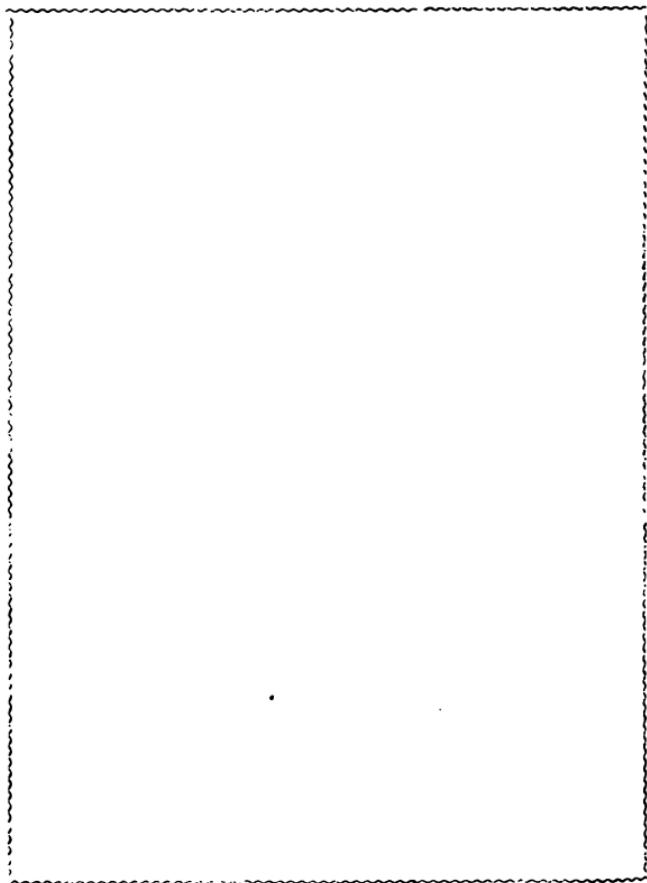


To Charles Alexander, 12th Earl of Yome,

Y WHOSE KIND PERMISSION THE CHIEF PART OF  
THE ANGLING, HEREIN DESCRIBED, WAS  
ENJOYED, IN THE AUTUMN OF 1880,

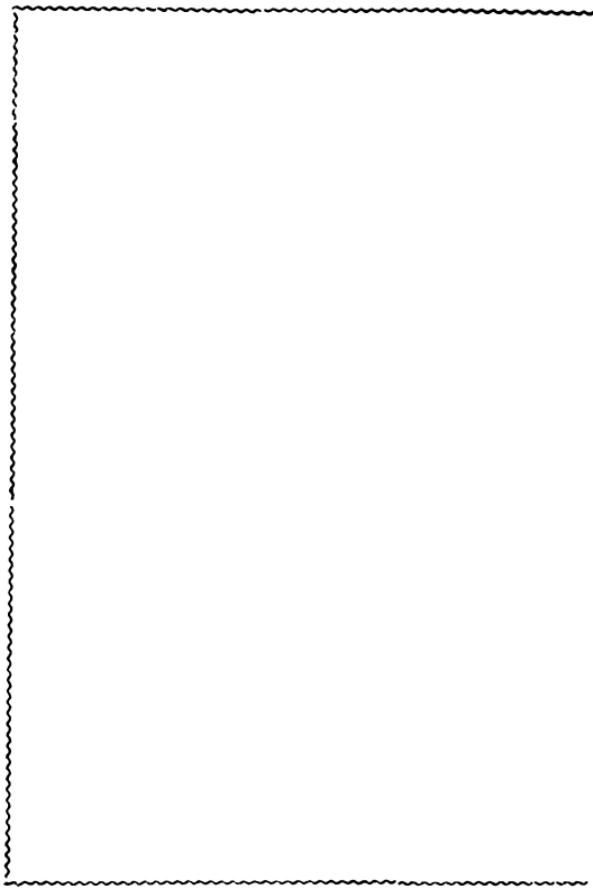
THIS CANTO IS DEDICATED BY

The Author.



## **The Angler's Lament:**

**AN INCIDENT ON THE EARN AT DUPPLIN ON THE LAST DAY  
OF THE FISHING SEASON, 1878.**



## The Angler's Lament.

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EVEN hours of toil! the river in good  
ply—

The day a final one of angling season—  
Yet not a single fish had ta'en the fly,  
And inexperienced folk might ask the reason.

Consult your weather-glass, and mark its fall  
By slow degrees of obstinate declension :  
Observe that lowering sky—they're both a call  
For an old angler's gravest apprehension.

Vainly one sees each favourite pool replete  
With finny monsters, through the water glancing,  
Not to seek food, but in this way to greet  
The spate their instinct tells them is advancing.

We cannot analyse the nervous tact  
By which these fish prognosticate the weather,  
But long experience confirms the fact  
How at such times they "shut up" altogether.

Yet who that really loves the "gentle art,"  
And has a fair amount of self-reliance,  
Would ever hesitate to do his part,  
And set all evil omens at defiance ?

There's just a chance that some attractive fly  
May tempt a traveller from his resting station ;  
Or, if it fail to captivate his eye,  
The very casting is a fascination !

Across the run your lure is neatly brought  
In constant expectation of some booty ;  
And if no fish will take it?—then they *ought!*  
And they, not you, are failing in their duty !

If told, they're not to blame for being shy,  
Though shyness makes its subjects somewhat  
skulky ;  
Still obstinacy's odious, you'll reply,  
And *that's* at bottom of their turning sulky.

Well ! could you see from salmons' point of view,  
They wouldn't take your argument for granted :  
They'd say the fault was not in them, but you,  
Who pestered them with baits that were not wanted.

But to my tale :—We fished from off the bank  
Dyke, Dick's, and Dupplin stream so often fruity ;  
Then crossing, waded down the Croys and Stank,  
But without taking e'en the smallest booty—

To Ministers', and Wilkinson below,  
And to both Buchans we in turn proceeded ;  
But vain our efforts—futile every throw—  
Doctors, Jock Scotts, and Charmers all unheeded.

So when all reasonable hope was past,  
And darkening sky proclaimed the day was dying,  
With sadness we retraced our steps at last  
Up to the shallow where our boat was lying.

“ Now pull, M'Laren, to the further shore ;  
Time's nearly up—see how the day is fading—  
You'll meet me at the Ministers' once more,  
While from this side I'll fish the cast by wading.”

Ten years ago this pool was quite first-rate  
For always holding salmon, and their taking ;  
But spates have hurt the channel much of late,  
Silting it up, and change of current making.

The stream rushed onwards with a surging sweep  
'Mid boulder stones, where fish were always lying,  
And the adjacent parts were wide and deep,  
Though sluggish t'wards the end—there's no deny-  
ing.

But now the sand has formed a growing shoal,  
With a back-water stagnating behind it ;  
Yet, since the mischief is beyond control,  
We must proceed to take it as we find it.

Well ! as I reached that corner of the stream,  
Where I must wade as deep as boots would let me,  
I realized, what one may sometimes dream,  
A sight so sudden as almost upset me !

Full twenty salmon, as if all inspired,  
Throughout that current's course were boldly leaping ;  
And I, by pent-up emulation fired,  
Was not content, be sure, with only peeping !

As quick as thought, a beauteous silver grey,  
On double hook, was to the line appended—  
(That's a sure pattern, when the night and day  
In deepening twilight are together blended.)

Dear brother anglers, I need scarcely tell  
What your experience is often proving ;  
The gloamin' is to fish a sort of spell  
When those of heaviest weight are aiblins moving.

Now, as I paid out line at every cast,  
The furthest confines of the run to cover,  
I spied a monster, of a size so vast  
That his dimensions made me creep all over.

Three times I saw this splendid salmon dash  
Above the surface of his distant quarters,  
Then disappear with a portentous splash,  
Which cut deep circles in the seething waters.

"Be canny, now!" (if thought were clothed in speech);

"Fish, inch by inch, sedately, at your leisure :  
You've line enough—he's nearly in your reach—  
Another step—and you can take his measure!"

With nice adjusted aim the fly is cast  
Just where his nose should be—a rush!—a  
flounder!—

A furious draw ! Hurrah ! I'm hard and fast  
In what I guess is—well—a forty pounder !

Off ! like a shot, at once he sped away  
Beyond the stream, full eighty yards and over,  
And I was left, to follow as I may,  
Regain the shore, and all that line recover !

For if it be submerged at any length,  
'Tis by the current in a loop distended,

And should the fish just then exert his strength  
On a dead pull—you're broke—and all is ended.

This fellow might have played me such a trick  
When with so long a line I was encumbered ;  
But apprehension made my movements quick,  
Though threescore years and ten I'd lately num-  
bered.

Reeling in sharp, I ran forenent my prey,  
Rod up and tackle taut, as I required ;  
Now let the salmon struggle as he may,  
An even pressure holds him till he's tired.

In fitful course about the pool he'd roam,  
Then throw himself aloft in wild contortions,  
Lashing the surface into sheets of foam,  
And thus exhibiting his grand proportions !

But in the ratio of a salmon's bulk  
Speed so prolonged entails no small exertion ;  
It suits them better to lie still and sulk,  
Which process anglers view with much aversion.

Such, in this instance, was the actual case ;  
To a deep, quiet lair the fish retreated ;  
Whence a long bout of jerking tugs took place,  
For many minutes ceaselessly repeated.

He doubtless saw and felt the thread of gut,  
(Not threefold, but for fineness only single,)  
And tried the small but sturdy link to cut  
By rubbing his jaw-bone against the shingle !

This danger of a break was sternly met  
(For anglers know precisely what the course is) ;  
A draw down stream, with rod-top lowly set,  
Some movement from a salmon soon enforces.

The alluvia left with so much pressure spent,  
Could float no more—the contest was decided;  
Completely passive down the pool he went,  
Which near this point grew shallow and divided.

The greater portion flowed on our side,  
Along a channel steep, and somewhat narrow,  
Which caused the water of the stream to glide  
Unbroken, but as speedy as an arrow.

Down this the fish allowed itself to float,  
Now on one side and then the other turning,  
As listless as a log or empty boat,  
While we to gaff him were intensely yearning.

But we were parted by an upright wall  
Of bank, about eight feet above the river ;  
And I'd a prospect at the end of all,  
Which gave me a convulsive kind of shiver !

Where the brae terminates, two willow trees  
Of ample size, with branches, stood expanded ;  
And if my rod or line were hanked in these,  
I should indeed effectually be stranded !

If I ran forwards, they would intervene  
Betwixt me and the capture of this whopper ;  
Or, if I tried to shun their leafy screen,  
I should catch something else—and that's a cropper !

'Twas lucky that the current shoaled just here  
Off to a depth of scarce a dozen inches ;  
So I must venture, and allay my fear  
With the old song of "He's a knave that flinches."

No standing still ! however rude the shake,  
Or worse mishap, in which this leap may find me ;  
I must at once resolve th' attempt to make,  
And run all risks, to get those trees behind me.

One moment, therefore, saw me o'er the brink  
Seated, and for this heavy drop preparing—  
The next below the brae like plummet sink,  
Leaving M'Laren on the summit staring !

All safe ! though with the shock I'm rather queer,  
No more by dread of obstacles I'm haunted ;  
No harm's befallen either man or gear,  
And I pursue the kipper, nothing daunted !

Now we were launched upon that famous cast,  
Denoted "Wilkinson" by all the neighbours ;  
The trees and dangerous water fairly past,  
And little prospect of protracted labours.

The rapids, erst divided, here once more  
In one united stream together mingle,  
With channel deepish t'wards the further shore,  
But shallowing here to ripples on a shingle.

The fish was floating still an inert mass,  
Regardless what direction he should follow ;  
So I induced him by degrees to pass  
From the thin stream into a tiny hollow.

There he lay quiet, resting for a while,  
With shoulders, back, and tail above the water :  
Like Moses, half afloat upon the Nile,  
Till he was landed by King Pharaoh's daughter !

What better fortune could an angler ask  
With this huge kipper almost in possession ?  
To land him now would seem an easy task,  
Requiring only judgment and discretion.

Had but the gillie stalked him *from behind*,  
And *up* the shallow to his ankles waded,  
To such approach the fish would have been blind,  
And with the gaff he might have been invaded.

Had sapient Irvine been with me that day  
He would have seen at once th' exact position,  
Would have outflanked the salmon as he lay,  
And landed him with ease and expedition.

Not so !—M'Laren saw that he was done,  
And for wet boots had little inclination ;  
But calculating that the prize was won,  
Dry-footed on the shore maintained his station.

Twice he advanced to make the fatal stroke,  
*Fronting* the fish, which sluggishly retreated ;  
And twice, forgetting that we might be broke,  
The same unwise experiment repeated.

But while in hopes ere long to reach his prey,  
He craned about the water's edge, and pottered :  
Up flew the line ! the hold had given way !—  
And backwards down the stream the salmon squat-  
tered !

Were the hooks broken ? No ; the steel was sound ;  
The gut, though deeply frayed, had never parted :  
No reason for escape could thus be found,  
Save that the hold within the mouth had started.

Oh ! who can paint an angler's bitter pain,  
The sinking of his heart and deep vexation,  
The shock which follows all that nervous strain,  
The sudden blank in place of exultation ?

Our flight had reached a quarter of a mile,  
And half an hour just the time it lasted ;  
On all my efforts Fortune seemed to smile,  
Till at the end my fondest hopes were blasted.

No words escaped me, no resentful sound,  
And memory cannot now my thoughts unravel ;  
But my dear rod was cast upon the ground,  
And then—I stamped with rage upon the gravel !

As for my henchman—faithful, brave, and keen—  
At his mistake no anger ever smoulders ;  
For had he that catastrophe foreseen,  
He would have plunged up to the very shoulders !

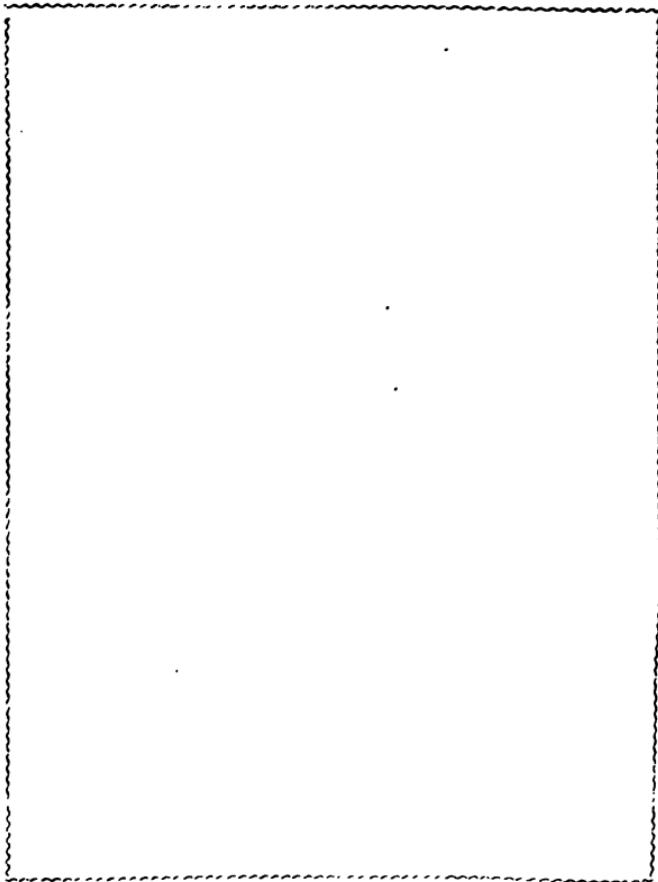
Now shades of night encompass me around !  
Enshroud me close within your sable curtain !  
No further chance of angling's to be found—  
The season's done—and so was I !—for certain.

Farewell, sweet Dupplin ! and farewell the Earn !  
(To whose dear owners I've been oft indebted) :  
Of you I dream, for you I often yearn ;  
But since that day no line in you I've wetted !

R. L.

## Interlude: A Dirge.

*"Vidi crudeles dantem Salmonea pœnas."*—VIRG. ÆN. vi.



## Interlude : A Dirge.

---



HAVE tried to relate how in seventy-eight

I lost a huge, ponderous kipper,  
Which was utterly beat, but made good his retreat  
Through the fault of my gillie or clipper.

As an angling concern I had taken the Earn,  
Going halves with a friend and relation ;  
But the season of drought threw us fearfully out,  
And it proved but a bad speculation.

But that time of reverse was followed by worse  
In the year eighteen hundred and eighty ;  
For to drought if you'll please to add salmon disease,  
You'll admit the disaster was weighty.

The previous year was intensely severe,  
Being winter from early October ;  
And constantly dry, with no water supply,  
Till the spring gave us weather more sober.

The frost was so hard that fish were debarred  
From frequenting their “redds” for the spawning—  
A fact which alone we should greatly bemoan,  
As of scanty supplies a forewarning !

The baggits would stay till roe wasted away  
At a risk of ovarian congestion,  
Which mischief took place, in full many a case,  
During winter and spring without question.

No year passes by that *some* fish don’t die  
At the time when the spawning is ended ;  
But the residue flee, if they can, to the sea,  
To recover their flesh and be “mended.”

By instinct they wait for a suitable spate  
To be off to their maritime quarters,  
When, by aid of the stream, they pass down like  
    a dream,  
To be bathed in the wholesome salt waters.

Salmon's nature, it's clear, would suggest the idea  
How to gain back the health they were losing ;  
But the river so low forbade them to go,  
And they lost any power of choosing.

For here they were set, as if caught in a net,  
Not a drop of fresh water to float 'em !  
And I humbly surmise we should feel no surprise  
At the fierce epidemic which smote 'em.

About the deep holes they collected in shoals,  
As crowded as Jews in the Ghetto,\*

\* The quarter in Rome where the Jews are compelled to live.

Till the river became, in fact, if not name,  
Half charnel house, half Lazzaretto !

Every reach in the course of the Tweed was a source  
Of pollution with dead and with dying ;  
Salmon, minnows, and trout were all scattered about,  
In one plague-struck community lying !

'Tis admittedly true that some symptoms were new  
In that late indiscriminate slaughter ;  
Yet it might be the taint of the usual complaint,  
Aggravated by filthy, stale water.

Fish require pure air, as we, to repair  
The waste which results from existence :  
If oxygen fail, no food's of avail  
To supply them with means of subsistence.

Should you happen to go to the tanks at the "Zoo,"  
Where fish swim in view of beholders,  
You'll at times see a crust, in appearance like must,  
Adhere to their heads or their shoulders.

Now, must is a sign, as in cellars of wine,  
That the air's in a state of stagnation :  
And the fact is the same in the instance I name,  
Though in water for fishes' natation.

The loss of good health is developed by stealth  
In these captives deprived of volition ;  
And the fungus which grows on the poor fishes' nose  
Is the index of failing condition.

This fact pervades all, things great as things small—  
The salmon no less than the gudgeon ;  
Restrict the supply of air, and fish die,  
As sure as though felled by a bludgeon.

If a deep, sluggish pool with salmon be full,  
And scarce any stream running through it,  
You'll find by degrees they'll contract some disease,  
Which will make their proprietors rue it !

And this, I suspect, was the fatal effect  
Of unparalleled drought in the weather ;  
The germs of complaint spread beyond all restraint,  
And killed down the fish altogether.

Such dead as were found were laid underground  
To arrest the contagion from spreadin',  
For fish, newly run, were soon stricken and done  
In each pool that they put their poor head in !

A rattling big flood, with its liquified mud,  
Was wanted the channel for scouring,  
And for sweeping away what had fallen a prey  
To a plague so intense and devouring.

So the river was left of produce bereft  
Till the scourge by spring floods was abated,  
And the question arose, if after these blows  
The salmon would be re-instated ?

There's a proverb of old in which we are told  
That the sea's so prolific a mother ;  
There is *in* it about as much fish as come *out*  
To feed us one time and another.

Let us hope it is true of salmonidæ, too,  
That the sea a fresh stock will deliver ;  
For 'tis certain, at least, there was scarcely a beast  
Of that sort left alive in the river !

Nor may we assume because there is room  
For their growth and improvement in ocean,  
That they can be bred, save in gravelly bed  
And *fresh* water, with adequate motion.

Nay—if they won't thrive, or even survive,  
In foul water, and drought, and bad weather,  
We must keep up our store and raise plenty more  
By different means altogether.

For should we have lost the whole breed to our cost  
By fausse-couches, and death, and sepulture,  
We have visions and dreams of re-stocking our  
streams  
By that novel device—pisciculture !

In some quiet beild, as at Stormontfield,  
We want a few ponds with protection—  
To follow the plan dear Frank Buckland began,  
(Of raising young parr in perfection !

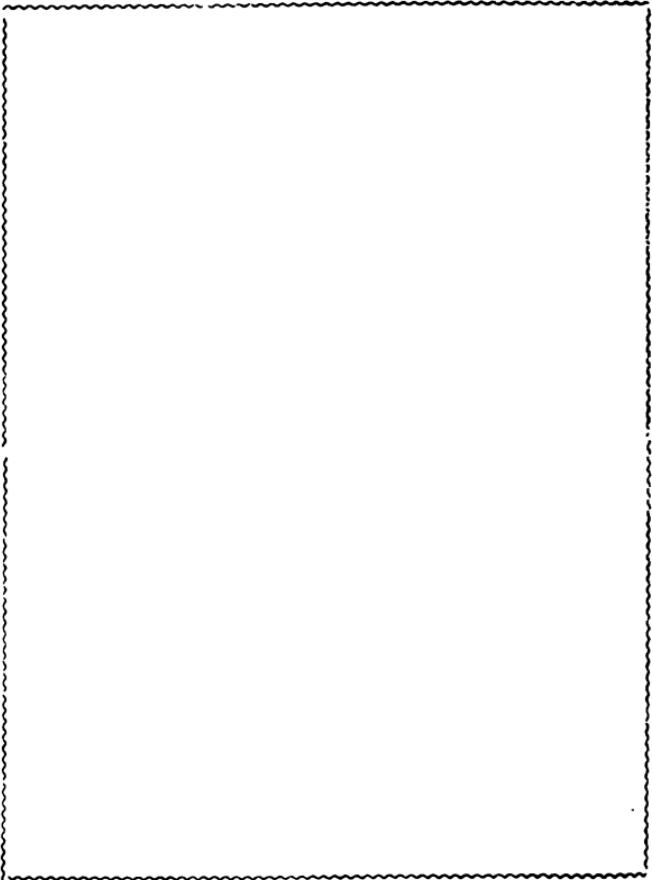
With a *will* there's a *way*—what's done on the Tay,  
At Tweedside is as sure of succeeding :  
'Tis a simple affair—pure water and air  
Will develop the ova for breeding.

But in Tweed an abuse devoid of excuse  
Is hurtful to fish, men, and cattle,  
Which increases, they say, in a dangerous way,  
And excites a riparian battle.

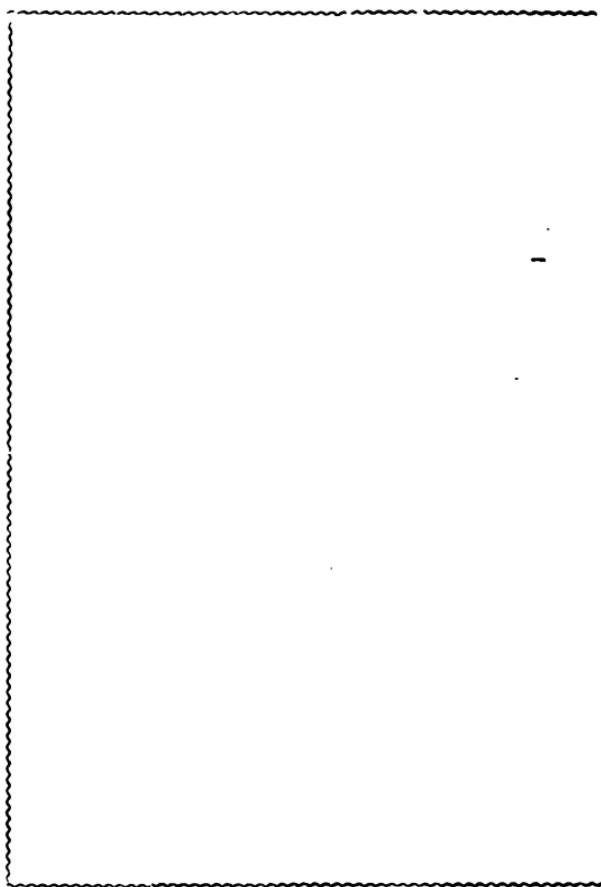
May they hit the sair blot o' that mercantile spot—  
Galashiels ! wi' its tartans and flannel—  
Shedding waters like ink, with a fetor and stink,  
Which poison the Tweed and its channel !

They've hydropathy cures, hotels, an sic lures,  
Anent which there is o'er muckle jaw, mon ;  
'Twere better ava' for Tweedsiders an' a'  
If they'd mend the puir kelts an' the sawmon !

R. L.



**Compensation.**



## Compensation.

---



HE summer passed by more sunny and  
dry  
In the north than old folks could re-  
member,

And unless I forget, there was not the least wet  
Till about the thirteenth of September.

I had visits to pay, and had promised to stay  
At Eslington first, in my outing ;  
Though Lord R. wrote me word, it was simply  
absurd  
To expect in the Aln any troutting.

The stream at the time was a streak of green slime,  
Without over statement or blether ;  
Nor did he once care, all the weeks he'd been there,  
To put his trout tackle together.

Now here was my run of good fortune begun,  
(For I wasn't delayed by this panic),  
As we started by train, a magnificent rain  
Went with us from London to Alnwick !

And when the chaise stopped—as “at home” we  
were dropped—

To be welcomed by Harry, dear fellow !  
The Aln had “gaen oot” abune half a foot,  
Quite as thick as pea soup, and as yellow !

Next day she'd run in, pale-coloured and thin,  
With east wind a nice ripple producing ;  
And a drizzling rain just now and again,  
Which proved to the trouties seducing.

Nor is there a doubt that, after long drought,  
When fish have grown feckless and lazy,  
The very first shower has magical power  
To drive them all perfectly crazy.

So I fancied to try if they'd look at the fly :  
My nephew'd gone out for some shooting,  
Letting "Uncle Rob" stay to go after his prey—  
(They call me "Rob-water" for looting !)

There's a limited space just in front of the place  
Scarce the fourth of a mile in extension,  
'Twixt a foot bridge and lane, and the "cauld" of  
grey stane  
(Border term for dam-head, I may mention.)

Then the burn's from the door sixty yards and no  
more,  
Where we oft wet our line at beginnings ;

But I little thought such a lot would be caught  
In such a small distance for innings.

It proved the good scheme of fishing *up* stream,  
And more than rewarded my labours ;  
For each bonnie trout was drawn downwards and  
out,  
Without ever disturbing his neighbours.

They were rising so fast, there was scarcely a cast  
But one took the first fly he might chance see—  
(I put on but two, and I'll tell 'em to you,  
A "hare's lug," and at tail "Hoffland's Fancy.")

The result was a score of five dozen and more  
(Baker's dozens they were, if you ask it),  
And, weighing all round three or four to the pound,  
They made a respectable basket.

In that evening the rain came in earnest again,  
And continued all night without stopping,  
So the next day at eight we'd a furious spate,  
All the banks to some distance o'er-topping.

'Twould be two days from hence ere waters so dense  
To a normal condition subsided,  
And in four at the most I must leave my kind host,  
Which none could regret more than I did.

But what of the third?—if by luck it occurred  
That the weather would quietly settle,  
The Aln in that time would clear off its slime,  
And for fly be in excellent fettle.

When that day was at hand the river was grand!  
For our purpose it scarce could be better;  
But white clouds in blue sky, and hot sun in one's  
eye,  
Were scarce angling signs to the letter!

'Tisn't easy to say which is best in its way—  
A full water or suitable weather ;  
And 'tis only in dreams that a fisherman seems  
To secure both conditions together.

'Tis better, indeed, we are mostly agreed,  
That Providence rules this proceeding ;  
But if I had my choice, I should always rejoice  
At high water in course of receding.

Fish are on the *qui vive* from morning till eve  
When a river is flushed in its running,  
And they're mostly so keen for what they can glean  
That their appetite conquers their cunning.

As sods break away from the edge of the brae,  
Worms and larvæ are dropped in the eddy ;  
And each little prize is noted by eyes,  
And mouths to devour them ready.

On food they will gloat till they're full to the throat,  
And the mass tumbles out of their gullet ;  
Yet still they will rise at the succulent flies,  
As an epicure plays with a pullet.

But after two days of glut in such ways  
They become rather careless and saucy,  
And unless they are hit by a tempting tit-bit,  
They don't or they *won't*, any more see.

We walked up a mile, past the mill of Great Ryle,  
Before we began our campaigning ;  
For there we could find many pools to our mind,  
Dark-coloured, but clearness regaining.

To counteract glare, a westerly air  
Gave the flies a nice undulous motion,  
Inviting the trout to be on the look-out,  
If on feeding they had the least notion.

To make my tale short, we had excellent sport,  
Though they wanted some little persuasion ;  
Yet they rose pretty fast, and we numbered at last  
Just the same as on th' other occasion.

Thus ended my bout with the Eslington trout,  
For a burn 'twas sufficiently fruity ;  
But for salmon I burned, and to Scotland adjourned  
In hopes of some weightier booty.

Yet a trip to the Ness met with little success,  
'Spite of labour, and Denison's science ;  
Two grilse were the most of which I could boast,  
For the fish set us both at defiance.

Our daintiest flies could elicit no rise,  
Though cast in each favourite quarter,  
And the painful effect was to make us suspect  
There was scarcely a fish in the water.

But symptoms of wet awakened hope yet  
That the rivers might soon be in order,  
And a spin by the train soon brought us again  
To familiar scenes on the Border.

It was pleasant indeed, upon crossing the Tweed,  
To see trouters engaged in their calling ;  
It denoted a fresh, and the prospect of “fesh”  
On the move, when a water is falling.

From St. Boswells the run is conveniently done  
In an hour to Ancrum’s dear portal ;  
And the Scotts take such care of each friend staying  
there  
That their guest is a fortunate mortal !

Sir William was bent that I should be sent  
On the morrow to fish at Makerstoun,  
And with a fair day, he proceeded to say,  
Your chance will be far from the worst one.

One morning of late he himself landed eight  
With George Wright at the lowermost water ;  
'Twas there I should go, and he'd have me to know  
That the prospect was good for some slaughter.

As the morning was gray, I was early away,  
And met Wright on the Trows at his station ;  
So, while fixing the gear, I was eager to hear  
From him some correct information.

" Now, Geordie, just say, what the hope is to-day."  
" Weel, there's reason we both should be cheery,  
" The water's no bad, an' there's fesh to be had,  
" If it dinna turn bright—that's the query.

" Sin' the spate was begun they've been a' on the  
run ;  
" They're the first we ha'e had a' the season ;  
" An' ye'll see wi' yer eyes they are weel on the rise,  
" Sae for failure I can't see a reason.

“ I'll warrant there's scores, juist here i' the Doors,  
“ An' the cast is in excellent fettle ;  
“ Ye'll heuk ane in there, but he'll ficht ye richt sair,  
“ Sae be sure that yer line's o' gude mettle.

“ Ye ken a' the cast—dinna fesh ower fast ;  
“ Try it close—take yer time (for ye've planty.)  
“ Hech ! that sawmon was bold—an' ye've sun'e  
gotten hold !  
“ He's clean run, an' in weicht abune twanty !”

(Now, here I may say that George has a way  
Of revealing his inmost reflections,  
And if not confused, I'm immensely amused  
At hearing his quaint interjections.

They're full of shrewd sense, 'mid excitement in-  
tense,  
And I'm told what I quite can conjecture,

That when he's alone, and has a fish on,  
He delivers the same kind of lecture.)

“Aye, ye've heuked him!—that's richt—dinna  
haud 'im too ticht,

“For fear ye'd be raxing yer tackle—

“Ane could safely rely he wad come to thon fly,  
“Siller grey, with a guinea-fowl hackle.

“Check him now!—for he wants to be at his auld  
haunts,

“I' them craigs; but ye'll no let him enter;

“In a moment he'd cut yer cast o' gude gut—

“If ye can, play him weel in the centre.

“We've had mony a break 'twixt the Doors an' the  
Straik

“Wi' them boulders and queer perforations;

“'Neath *them* sawmon lie, an' sma' blame if they try  
“To regain their oreginal stations.”

This salmon, indeed, ran thrice at full speed  
For the craigs, which a shelter presented ;  
But the efforts were vain, being met by a strain  
That the risky manœuvre prevented.

I was thus far afloat in the stern of the boat,  
Till by Wright it was carefully stranded ;  
Then with face to the foe, stepping cautious and  
slow,  
Rod in hand I walked backwards, and landed.

(Here, I'll frankly confess I was once in a mess  
While playing a twenty-four pounder ;  
Going backwards, I trod on spare joints of my rod,  
And smashed every one with the flounder !

True, the fish wasn't lost—but at what a sad cost !  
*How Learmonth did chaff me ! and well so—*

Yet 'twas good for the trade, and fresh pieces were  
made

By matchless John Forrest of Kelso.)

But now all was sound, and we stood on firm ground,  
Where we held a commanding position ;  
Till the salmon was beat, without force to retreat,  
And reduced to a feeble condition.

The water was broke by a languishing stroke  
Of his tail, while the head burrowed under ;  
Then he yielded at length to superior strength,  
And was netted by Wright without blunder.

(If, in taking such prize, I am asked to surmise  
How long it requires to win it,  
I would say in the rough it gives margin enough  
To reckon two pounds to a minute.)

Says George, "A braw fesh ! wi' tide lice on his flesh !

" Whan did he leave Berwick, I wonder ?

" He's bonnie and clear, as a've seen a' the year,

" An' by balance a twanty-three punder !

" But jump i' the boat, and cover the throat

" O' thon stream, ere it breaks into torrent ;

" Ye'll heuk ane in there—it's anither affair

" To land him—it's risky I'll warrant."

Now the throat which he meant was a rapid descent,

First oily, then foam like a lasher ;

And should a fish go down there, you must know

You would meet with a terrible smasher !

Our fortune was great—we had no time to wait—

Not patience, but caution, was needed ;

We collared a nine, which ere long became mine,

And then to fresh water proceeded.

We tried the Red Stone, to no purpose, I'll own,  
For which Geordie assigned a fair reason ;  
The water was bright, with a curl very slight,  
Though it needs a good rattling breeze on.

We skimmed up the cast, rather heedless and fast,  
To the stream where it really commences ;  
The pool is the same, but it alters its name  
To " Blakeman," in which little sense is.

Here, without much ado, we soon landed two,  
Making " Blakeman" sufficiently fruity ;  
A grilse of nice weight, between seven and eight,  
And a twenty-five baggit—a beauty !

Now the sun came in force, making useless, of  
course,  
Further casting till that was diminished ;  
So we both went ashore for two hours or more,  
With a fear that our chances were finished.

On the neighbouring bank was a shieling of plank,  
Where anglers can rest in a measure ;  
Partake of good cheer, drink their sherry or beer,  
And indulge in a pipe at their leisure.

True, the taste of a “weed” can seldom succeed  
In affording *me* much satisfaction,  
Yet there’s scarcely a man but will smoke when he  
can,  
And “gude ‘baccy’s” to George an attraction.

So we chatted away through the heat of the day  
Till the sun from the water was shaded,  
Then started again to re-fish the Red Stane,  
Which Wright for its failure upbraided.

For the surface was still as the pool of a mill,  
Save the circles thrown up by deep boulders,  
And the fish were too shy to look up at the fly,  
Or to raise any “boil” with their shoulders.

Where the swift water breaks at the head of the  
“Straiks,”

We attempted our fly to deliver,  
Raising one without touch, and that was “no much”  
For the creamiest cast in the river.

Said George, “It’s too clear, though the gloamin’  
is near,  
“And by stillness our chances diminish ;  
“But we’ll give a fresh cast i’ the Doors juist at last,  
“Which will bring our day’s work to a finish.”

So we ransacked the stores of those magical Doors,  
Which harboured the fish in such plenty,  
And took one salmon more on the southerly shore,  
Which proved a strong kipper of twenty.

Geordie had his full say while the fish was on play  
For some time (for the kipper was plucky);

But when safe on land, Wright shouts, "Under-  
stand,

"A' consider ye've been verra lucky.

"Not a fesh on the heuk but we've landed and tuik

"Without ony break or disaster;

"And thae five on the grund will turn eichty-four  
pund,

"Which 'll gladden Sir Wulliam, the master!"

"Farewell! honest friend—this conquest will end

"Our fishing together this season;

"I wish it mayn't be the last visit for me,

"For which fear I'll assign you a reason.

"After twenty long years, Makerstoun appears

"To have changed both its tenant and rental;

"So my future is marred, but I must hold hard,

"And avoid being too sentimental!"

Of two days I'll speak, in the following week,  
When on upper Makerstoun campaigning—  
Two grilse brought to bank on the first; then a  
blank—

But of that there's no use in complaining.

When the river is low *that water's no go*,  
And the reason's not hard to unravel—  
Willie's bank is a shoal without any deep hole,  
And the Orchard stream choked up with gravel !

They threw out a “put,” that the current might cut  
Through the shingle to rocky foundations ;  
But, alas ! it's done worse—just the very reverse,  
And ruined those excellent stations !

The Orchard's a cast which could not be surpassed—  
“A sure find,” as all anglers asserted ;  
But it's now a surprise if one meet with a rise,  
For, in fact, the stream's all but deserted.

Its sides had a stock of deep shelves in the rock,  
Which salmon are wont to repose in ;  
But when every ledge is filled up to the edge,  
There's no shelter to poke their poor nose in !

Now, what should *we* do, if an inn that we knew  
Were replete with discomfort and smother ?  
If we needn't remain, our remedy's plain—  
We should simply resort to another !

And so with our friends—when a salmon ascends  
To take up his usual quarters,  
If he feel himself hurt with this rubble and dirt,  
He migrates to pleasanter waters.

Certain places *will* hold fish in heat or in cold,  
Be the waters too big or too little :  
If rocky and deep, *some* salmon they'll keep,  
Though to take they may be “ ower kittle.”

I can prove what I say about waters that *stay*  
(*Not stay* in the sense of stagnation)  
By a visit I paid, after Ancrum's was made,  
To Pavilion, by kind invitation.

For the Whorls and Boat Shiel, and more, Elm  
Wheel,  
Were examples of what I've been saying ;  
Fish linger just here, with their spawning beds near,  
Hence we speak of such places as "staying."

The Tweed had run in consumptively thin,  
And elsewhere the fish sulk'd at the bottom ;  
But we used to contrive to bring home four or five,  
And each day without failure we got 'em.

For my host, I should say, threw no chances away,  
But pulls them out fast when they're rising ;

He with *one* arm does more than some would with  
*four*,  
And his skill with the rod is surprising.

The butt is first placed in a belt at his waist,  
And he casts a good line at his leisure ;  
Then, if he get fast in a salmon at last,  
He adopts an ingenious measure.

A swivel is slung at his shoulder, and hung  
By a strap left, in casting, to dangle ;  
But with a fish on, scarce a moment is gone  
Ere it's fixed to the rod at an angle !

This keeps up the top, and won't let it drop,  
But retains it in proper position ;  
Setting free his left hand, the reel to command,  
And to shorten his line at volition.

Two fish on each day were my share of the prey,  
Weighing near eighty pound altogether ;  
But, alas ! further sport was completely cut short  
By keen frost and tempestuous weather.

Dear Pavilion ! I wot, I have haunted that spot  
Many years, as I'll presently mention—  
With the Learmonths for more than fifteen, and  
before,  
When the Broadwoods showed me kind attention !

Nay—earlier, too, when his Grace of Buccleuch  
Of Lord Somerville rented the water ;  
Wi' Jem Kerss for guide—I can say it with pride—  
We achieved some remarkable slaughter.

We'd *eleven* first day ; second, *twelve* to display ;  
A. D., forty-four, in September :

Then four on the third ; while the river was stirred  
Before *drummling*, I well can remember !

Three-and-forty I got ('twas a capital lot !)  
In six days, between Melrose and Mertoun :  
I have kept all the dates, and the accurate weights,  
And thus of the facts I am certain.

But Tweed, to be sure, was then pretty pure,  
Nor by wool manufactures infected ;  
Galashiels and its men were innocuous then,  
Nor its filth in the river collected.

Now mark !—t'other day, in the course of my stay  
At Pavilion, above the Bridge castin',  
A salmon came round, of twenty-three pound,  
To our fly, and the hook was struck fast in ;

Yet, when it was tired, and prudence required  
That the net in its meshes should hold it,

Wi' five miles for a course, and a *ramshackled* horse,  
'Twill take fifty minntes to win it.

Willie Scott's at his gate, though far from elate,  
And he greets me with evil surmising :  
"The water's no bad, if there's fesh to be had,  
"But A'm thinking they'll no be for rising."

We clear the grass lanes and begin at "Three  
Stanes,"  
Taking all other casts in their order,  
Trying all sorts of flies without ever a rise,  
So of "blank" I must be the recorder.

The sun with its blaze was sufficient to daze  
Any mortal who saw its reflexion  
In a river like glass, or a sheet of fine brass,  
With no breeze to improve its complexion.

With its "Dub" at high end, its waters extend  
For two miles amid streams and fine reaches :  
No portion of Tweed can surpass it, indeed,  
And that, honour bright, a true speech is !

I wish I could sum the casts as they come,  
But their names would fix me in a puzzle :  
I know them by heart, but the difficult part  
Is the *rhyme*, so I'll put on the muzzle.

Yet I'll mention a few : first, "The Dub" comes in  
view,  
Let to Denison, genial old fellow !  
He's "Mon Prince," nothing less ! holding this and  
the Ness,  
And a club man at Stockbridge as well, O !

Of rods he's a crop, which would furnish a shop,  
And his store of all tackle is fright'ning ;

But the Saturday's quest eclipsed all the rest—  
We'd a take which is seldom exceeded ;  
For no less than nine became Willie's and mine,  
Which no one enjoyed more than he did !

Let me say, if you please, that a strong, steady  
breeze  
From the morning till evening was blowing,  
And the light of the day was a soft mellow grey,  
The same tint on the water bestowing.

(Whereas change of light is disturbing to sight,  
And thereby fish, as we, are affected :  
As when salmon rise short, and escape being caught,  
Leaving us by such failures dejected !)

At "Lang Craig" we began, where an opposite man  
Of his casting had given it plenty,  
But failed of success ; while we captured no less  
Than a nineteen, a nine, and a twenty !

Indeed, I may say that our rivals that day  
Had *three* boats on their side of the water ;  
But this triple fuss did no mischief to us,  
Nor caused us to budge from our quarter.

I really forget if more prizes we met  
Ere we went to the hut for some luncheon ;  
Half-an-hour of rest giving time to digest  
The bread and cold meat we'd been munchin'.

Here a tame little bird, knowing well what occurred  
When we came to this spot, was invited  
To watch till we threw some crumbs within view,  
Which he claimed without being affrighted.

Now when we returned to our work we soon learned  
What a kettle of fish was in motion !  
For it seemed that our pool was replete with a  
“schule”  
Of salmon fresh run from the ocean !

Every third or fourth cast we had hold of one fast,  
And no sooner had that in possession  
Than another one came, to be served just the same,  
Till we'd taken six fish in succession !

I am certain the place, if measured by pace,  
Was not thirty yards in dimension ;  
Yet for all that we got, there remained such a lot  
As to show not the slightest declension.

Then the hold of the hook from four others was shook,  
After each had a vehement struggle ;  
Two indeed did we get 'gainst the hoop of the net,  
When they slipped from our grasp by a juggle !

It remains to relate the whole aggregate weight—  
'Twas pounds hundred and twenty and seven ;  
There were three of nineteen, twenty-two we have  
seen—  
Two nines, eight, and ten, and eleven !

From three till near five we continued to thrive  
In this wonderful cast of “White Eddie ;”,  
Then as night was at hand we returned to the land,  
Where a carriage from Hirsel was ready.

I was there as a guest to fulfil a request,  
That on Sunday I'd help a young neighbour :  
'Twas a service of love for our Master above,  
And a privilege rather than labour.

They asked me to stay at the Hirsel next day,  
And to try my last chance in the morning ;  
Which offer so kind could not be declined,  
Though the weather of mischief gave warning.

Half a gale, misty rain, then the frost back again,  
Though slight, with the wind from the nor'rard ;  
But the river was right both in colour and height,  
So we're off, to the tune of “hark forrad !”

But we met with a change disappointing and strange,  
Baffling all piscatorial cunning ;  
For in spite of our pains, three fish at "The Stanes,"  
When hooked, got away from us, running !

The first, somewhat rash, took the fly with a splash,  
Then shook himself off with a flounder ;  
Of the next, more demure, we felt quite secure,  
And adjudged him a twenty-three pounder.

We played him till done, and thought he was won,  
For he lay within reach quite inertly ;  
But just as the net to enclose him was set,  
He slipped from his moorings expertly !

*Five* indeed got away in the course of the day,  
From the light, or some cause atmospheric—  
Coming short of their mark, like a shot in the dark,  
Which nearly gave me an hysterick !

We landed but three, which, I think, you'll agree,  
With these losses, was not a large capture ;  
But the last (not the least) was so lovely a beast  
That it filled all beholders with rapture.

“ Nether Stream ” was the scene of this duel between  
My old self and this eminent beauty,  
And throughout the long fight I was in a blue fright  
Lest the issue should turn out unfruity.

The stream runs its course with a cataract's force  
In two currents, by boulders divided ;  
And behind one of these our boat lay at ease  
Till the fish on its action decided.

Thrice did it untwine sixty yards of my line,  
Running close to the opposite shingle ;  
Each time coming back on the opposite tack,  
With resistance, which made my blood tingle !

Then, swimming mid-stream, it put on extra steam,  
Heading down, with a pluck which was noble,  
Till it let itself go through the rapids below,  
While we followed, hard all, in the coble.

Here the water was thrown through great sluices of  
stone,  
Any contact with which would be mortal ;  
For 'twould instantly cut the best triple-plied gut,  
But we dashed through this dangerous portal.

The rush was too great for the salmon to wait,  
So it shot through the gap like a bullet,  
And all I could do was to let her go through  
Without check, or attempting to pull it.

But the rod was held high, with its point to the sky,  
To prevent the line slanting or bagging ;  
And Scott kept the boat stern foremost afloat,  
And followed the lead without flagging.

So the danger was past, and to "Otter-stone" cast,  
A deep, rocky pool, we descended,  
Where the fish tried to rest, with exhaustion opprest,  
Giving proof that the fight was near ended.

She could not sustain the continual strain  
Of our tackle, so firm and yet pliant ;  
But slowly gave in, while its silvery skin  
Gleamed in plunges still fierce and defiant.

Then we hasten to land, Willie taking in hand  
The net, of which he's such a master ;  
And in few moments more the salmon's ashore,  
Without breakage or any disaster.

I wasn't aware that the fair sex was there  
Looking on with intense satisfaction  
(Lady E. and a guest, at the latter's request,  
Who had never seen such a transaction.)

From the neighbouring height they'd an excellent sight

Of the battle from very beginning,  
And ran to the spot, when the salmon was got,  
To inspect the fair prize we'd been winning.

As it lay on the ground, with us clustered around,  
'Twas a picture which challenged attention ;  
And I wanted just then brush, pencil, or pen  
To sketch its fair form and dimension.

I may also relate, it exceeded in weight  
All the salmon I'd caught in the season ;  
'Twas as near twenty-six as the balance could fix,  
Which for further rejoicing gave reason.

Thus ended my fun ; the year's angling was done ;  
And soon back to old London we hasted :  
But I could not forget, amid labours and fret,  
The enjoyments I'd recently tasted.

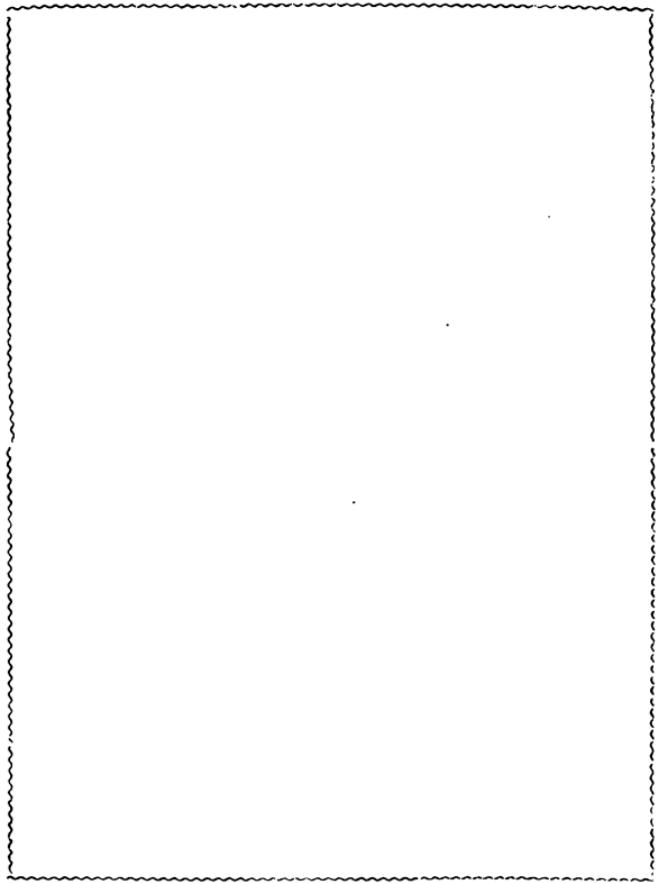
The result was not bad, spite of blanks which we  
had,

For in t' other eight days we scored thirty  
Of good average weight, and as Paddy would state,  
"All elane, the swate darlins, an' purty."

Let me then be content with the time that's been  
spent

In partaking of this recreation ;  
And hope to be free, e'en at seventy-three,  
For some chance in a future vacation.







**K**

**i**



—

# “The Lay of the Last Angler.”

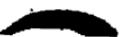
BY THE

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## Canto Five.

KELSO:

J. & J. H. RUTHERFURD, 20, SQUARE.  
1888.



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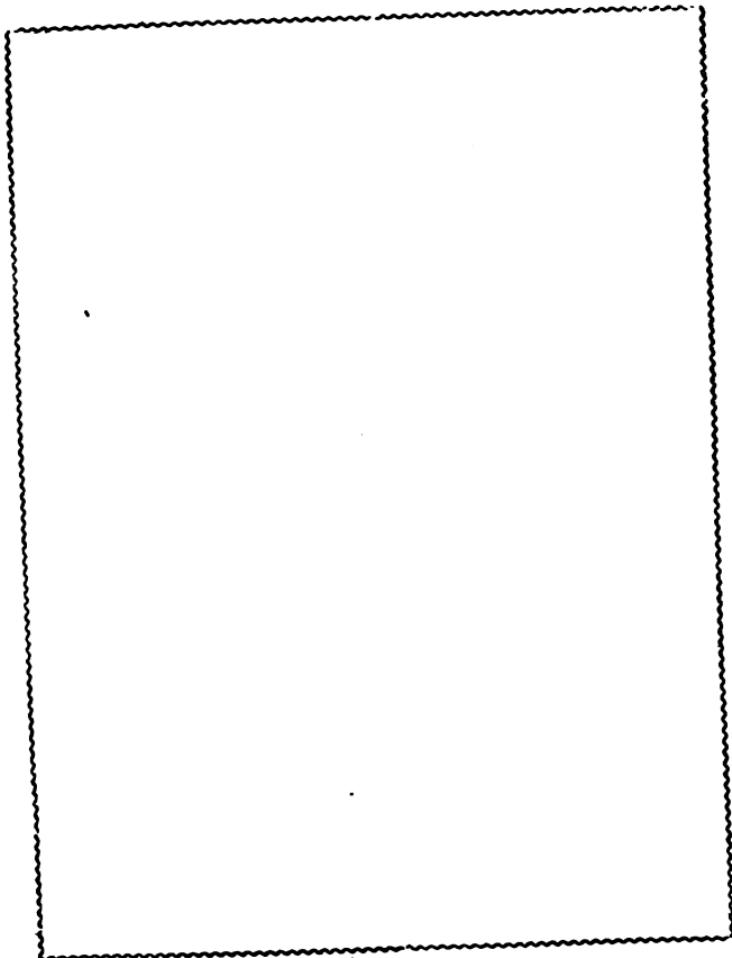
1888.



## **Dedication.**

---

*To fishermen of high and low degree,  
The following lines on angling I indite,  
And if they'll take a kindred wish from me,  
'Tis that their lines may frequently be tight.*



# “The Lay of the Last Angler.”

---

## CANTO FIVE.

---



THREE rivers occupy my thoughts in turn,  
Tay, Tweed, and (dear old ditch !) the  
Perthshire Earn.

What Muse will help me with this Liquid Trio ?  
Maybe Euterpe, or historic Clio ?  
Or if the subject's festive and bucolic,  
Thalia might endorse it, for a frolic !  
Am I presumptuous ?—perchance each Muse  
To patronize this doggrel may refuse :  
Objecting, that the lines are too prosaic,  
Not elegiac, Sapphic, or Alcaic !  
Then I'll repudiate all classic lore,  
And when she cuts me, vote the Muse a bore !

Say with effrontery, “I don’t care a pin,”  
And without patronage, my song begin !  
Or to some local Fays shall I resort,  
To aid me in descriptions of my sport ?  
Such sprites may yet about the Border dwell,  
Like the mysterious Maid of Avenel !  
Haunting some burn or dark-secluded dell,  
Beneath old Cheviot or the Carter Fell !  
Or water kelpies may our streams infest,  
Fright’ning poor rustics from their nightly rest !  
These, to escape their tricks of fiendish hate,  
A cautious minstrel should propitiate ;  
Whisp’ring, if questioned by his fellow men,  
“ Maybe’s they’re near—a body canna ken” !  
But leaving all uncanny speculation,  
I must forthwith proceed with my narration.  
Of the three Scottish rivers, first I’ll pay  
My grateful tribute to majestic Tay,  
Whose moss-fed waters and tumultuous streams  
Surpass the angler’s most exalted dreams.

From Murthley downwards I have fished it all—  
Past dear Meikleour, to Cargill, and Stob Hall,  
Past Campsie Linn, Burnfoot, and Cat-hole too,  
On to Strath-ord, with Stormontfield in view,  
Where the first salmon breeding ponds are placed,  
From which elsewhere fish culture may be traced.  
But, to be brief, throughout the river's length  
Stob Hall stands first, for grandeur and for strength—  
The eastern bank alone can really claim,  
From the old Scottish house, its famous name—  
'Tis Lady Willoughby's—the western sides  
Earl Mansfield owns—and these the Tay divides—  
(The latter as Taymount is better known ;  
And the Earl cedes it to his brother's son).  
By long agreement, all this splendid reach  
Is held, upon alternate days, by each—  
So there's no rivalry to interfere  
With other's rights—to each the coast is clear.  
The lower casts are those I know the best,  
And by these names are locally expressed—

Upper and Low Eel Brigg—the Washing Green—  
And Finford head, a fruity cast, I ween—  
This merges fiercely into Finford stream,  
Whose surging waves with shoals of salmon teem—  
Then the Oak Tree, a lengthy pool within  
The close vicinity of Campsie Linn—  
Here the great river seems awhile to sleep  
In glassy stillness—treacherous and deep !  
Then brimming over, makes a sudden vault  
Over a rocky dam of black basalt ;  
And breaks in yeasty waves against the walls  
Of massive boulders, ranged beneath the falls ;  
While the main pool’s of such immense extension,  
‘Tis like a tiny Loch, in its dimension,  
Where eddies, circling on its face, denote  
The rugged channel, over which they float.

Now, ere I speak of sport, let me recount  
To whom I owed it—Murray of Taymount—  
Dear Charlie Murray ! genial host and friend,  
Whose generous kindness nothing can transcend.

Four times he gave me fishing, year by year,  
Just as my natal day was drawing near.  
First, on October two, in eighty-three,  
Charles Murray took his share of work with me—  
A Lion's share it was—for twelve he got  
'Gainst ten, the number falling to my lot.  
His weight was also heavier by far—  
Quite sixty pounds and more—the chance of war !  
I'll say precisely, the united score  
Just reached three hundred pounds and twenty-four.  
That was a satisfactory beginning ;  
But beaten hollow by a later inning.  
The following year, but little could be got—  
Water too small, with weather still, and hot.  
But eighty-five's the year I well remember,  
Upon the twenty-second of September—  
A spate had brought great multitudes of fish,  
And all fell out, according to our wish—  
Day fresh and clear, with a delicious breeze,  
Waving salutes from all th' adjacent trees.

Then came the greatest take I'd ever seen,  
A score!—six salmon, and of grilse fourteen!  
And when these fish were scaled, the aggregate  
Was pounds two hundred and thirteen in weight.  
Now, mind you, this was all hard, honest casting;  
The exercise for full nine hours lasting—  
Some casualties, too, occurred of course,  
Fish struggled off, or broke me, which was worse.  
Once I was cut against a sunken boulder,  
And a stout hook was snapped across the shoulder—  
But accidents like these enhance our fun—  
Success would cloy, if sportsmen *always* won!  
And salmon were so numerous and game,  
One was scarce off, before another came.

Next day, we rested from our heavy strain,  
But on the twenty-fourth we fished again.  
Rises were numberless! but fish came short,  
Or else another score we might have caught!  
But, as it was, a dozen fish were mine—  
Total in pounds, a hundred sixty-nine—

Three of them were indeed of extra weight ;  
One thirty-two, another twenty-eight.  
The first was hooked in such an awful torrent  
That none, on Tay, surpasses it, I'll warrant.  
Upper Eel Brigg was the uproarious spot  
Where *salmo* gave us “ Toddy strong and hot ”!  
Without a check, he simply dashed away,  
Through that and following two casts of Tay.  
We after him, in boat, with all our might—  
Believe me, 'twas a somewhat nervous sight !  
At last we brought him to, at Finford head,  
Where he consented to be gently led,  
Till he lay quiet, in a cheeky place,  
Beaten, by having swum at such a pace ;  
When MacIntosh soon had him with the gaff,  
And landed him, with an exultant laugh—  
Oh ! 'twas a beauty ! sides like silver bright,  
And belly of the purest pearly white,  
Dark purplish blue upon the back and shoulders,  
And form which could not fail to charm beholders !

The twenty-eight was captured quite at last ;  
Long after sunset, when the light was past :  
No line or fly upon the cast I saw,  
But all at once was *felt* a heavy draw !  
Now 'twas mechanical the fish to play,  
But how 'twas *seen*, I really cannot say ;  
Yet MacIntosh *did* see, and gaffed it too,  
A thing which none, but such as he, could do !

Here let me mention that, upon the Tay,  
The pressure far exceeds what I can say—  
I don't suppose the actual fish exceed,  
In strength of muscle, others of their breed ;  
The *weight* of *water* 'tis which gives assistance  
To all the finny tribe in their resistance—  
The stream's so huge, and has so sharp a fall,  
That it's a wonder getting fish at all !

'The following year there'd been a splendid spate,  
But I reached Taymount some few days too late—  
The river had been threshed to such extent  
That fish and fishermen were well-nigh spent.

The first, at least, had seen so many flies  
That they were “*vera dour*” upon the rise—  
In short, we found them difficult to fix ;  
But, in the end, we managed to get six.

Now, if those four days’ take we calculate,  
They mount, in number, just to forty-eight—  
A proof what may be done on Tay with fly,  
When weather suits, and water’s in good ply.

Yet such a bag I never should have made  
Save for good MacIntosh, the keeper’s aid.  
He pulled the boat, without a moment’s rest,  
He chose the flies (some by himself were dressed,  
And beautifully, too, his flies were made,  
As if he’d been an expert in the trade ;)  
When fish were *on*, he helped me to the land,  
And gaffed them surely, with unerring hand.  
Good, stalwart henchman, keen as mustard too,  
If I fish Tay once more, I hope ‘twill be with you !

Now let me speak upon a plan called “*harling*”  
(I can’t abide it ! pray, don’t think me snarling !)

In a boat's stern, three salmon rods are put,  
Each with a reel and casting-line of gut—  
They rest in grooves, one rod at either angle,  
And one mid-ships—and from their points they dangle  
Some forty yards of line, each armed with flies  
Of patterns likely to obtain a rise.  
The butts are held in sockets, on the floor,  
Not fastened—simply held—and nothing more.  
Each line is loosely coiled around a stone,  
“The tell-tale”—then the three are left alone.  
The lines run parallel to one another,  
And never interfere, or cause a bother ;  
Two oarsmen pull the boat at gentle pace,  
In frequent zig-zags, past each likely place ;  
The flow of water keeps the lines “a-taut,”  
And when a fish by either hook is caught,  
Up flies the tell-tale, with a sudden jerk,  
When some one grasps the rod, and sets to work  
To play and land the beastie—if he's able—  
Or else the fish gets off—and turns the table !

No doubt, when salmon for their food are greedy,  
These captures may be numerous, and speedy :  
Yes ! there are times when wondrous things are done,  
And, mind, the odds are always three to one.  
But if the takes are far between—or slow—  
How will you occupy your time ? I know  
‘Tis wearisome your vigilance to keep ;  
You’ll read a book, or smoke, or fall asleep ;  
Yet would-be anglers for this harling thirst,  
Because it saves them trouble from the first ;  
Returning home, they boast of catching salmon—  
Not they—the boatmen do it—so that’s gammon.  
Now, if you ask the men to tell you why  
This harling is employed, they’ll straight reply,  
The river is so wide, that when you cast  
Great quantities of fish are simply passed ;  
They’d take the fly, it’s argued, if they saw it,  
But ere it comes across them, you withdraw it.  
That may be true ; but where’s the angling science,  
If on one’s casting there be no reliance ?

Give me some *toil* in working for my game—  
Success without exertion is but tame ;  
Just as in hunting, there's no earthly fun  
In chopping a poor fox without a run ;  
So, to remain quiescent in a boat,  
Serenely watching these three lines a-float,  
Without the pains of holding rod in hand,  
Is such a sport as I don't understand.

Farewell ! illustrious river ; now we'll turn  
Our comments to thy tributary, Earn—  
An unloquacious stream, which cleaves a path  
Through verdant meadows of its native strath ;  
Past Dupplin's fair domain and wooded braes  
It indolently creeps, in tortuous maze ;  
Now settling into pools of depth profound,  
Scarped from high banks of the adjacent ground ;  
While on the shoaling counter shores commingle  
Extensive beds of gravel, sand, or shingle :

For Earn shakes off at times her sleepy mood,  
Under the influence of some heavy flood ;  
Resistless torrents set these beds in motion  
With all the violence of a mimic ocean.  
There are no buttresses of solid rocks  
To stand the battery of persistent shocks :  
Water and shingle mixed create a force  
Which oft diverts the river from its course,  
Cuts out new channels, fills the old with rubble,  
Roots up great trees, and gives a world of trouble ;  
Croys must be wattled, and embankments built,  
To save the land from waste, and pools from silt.  
But as to angling, this year, or the next,  
'Tis much the same—we need not be perplexed ;  
Fishers in Earn, for salmon, may be told,  
In autumn, 'tis as full as it can hold.  
I speak with confidence—I've made the trial—  
About the quantity there's no denial.  
Then to compare with Tay in size and weight,  
There's little difference to calculate ;

One estu'ry the shoals of fish provides  
To either river from its daily tides ;  
The larger water claims the greater share  
Of produce, which, in equity, is fair ;  
But fish of heavy weight each year return,  
For spawning, to their native stream, the Earn.  
In eighty-six I rented Dupplin waters,  
And in the Castle had delightful quarters ;  
Besides the river, I'd two days a week  
On the Earl's Loch, of which I'll briefly speak.  
'Tis about sixty acres in extent,  
And beats all other lakes which I frequent.  
The trout are mostly of Lochleven breed,  
Which, in their size and quality, exceed  
The common kind : they feed upon a snail  
Which grows amongst the gravel without fail ;  
And chemists say, that their siliceous shell  
Makes the trout crisp, and fattens them as well ;  
While aqueous plants along the edge supply  
Great stores of larvæ and ephemeral fly :

At any rate, give reasons as we may,  
These trout are “*première classe*,” without gainsay.  
Like other fish, whose feeding’s rich and good,  
They’re often somewhat fickle in their mood :  
Sometimes, from cause unknown, I must confess,  
I’ve cast for hours without the least success ;  
But, usually, they’re lively on the rise,  
And mean to take, without a compromise.  
One day in August, eighteen eighty-two,  
We had a sample what this Loch can do.  
’Twas somewhat rough, with steady wind from east,  
When large fish chase the smaller from their feast ;  
I captured nine, and five of them in weight  
Scaled fifteen pounds upon the aggregate.  
Another time, with friend, thirteen were got,  
All but two pounds a-piece—a bonnie lot !

But readers will be weary of details :  
Enough to say, this Loch but seldom fails.  
But it *did* fail last year, and river too ;  
On neither was there anything to do !

The drought was such that, for a lengthy time,  
The only thing an angler caught was *slime*!  
August the twentieth is, by law, the day  
When nets are taken off the Earn and Tay;  
But for three weeks from thence no fish were taken,  
And faith in renting rivers became shaken!  
Until September four we had no shower  
Which, on the water, had the slightest power.  
Then we were treated to a three-foot flood,  
Which brought up fish, and made the angling good—  
Good by comparison, for a week or more  
One fish per diem was the usual score.  
Then they advanced to seven, and to eight,  
The numbers swelling, both in fish and weight.  
Here Mowbray Trotter came—a nephew keen,  
Whose captures in three days were just fourteen;  
A twenty-seven 'mong the first he struck,  
Those happy youngsters always have the luck!  
However, on the morrow, wading “Dicks,”\*  
I pulled out eight, and one was twenty-six,

\* A cast at the top of Dupplin water.

And, 'tis remarkable, these eight I took  
With the same fly, surnamed a “Popham” hook.  
It pleased their fancy, that was evident,  
But in the end to tatters it was rent !  
(For Popham's self I had a warm affection,  
We got into All Souls the same election ;  
It is a distant retrospect for me,  
We became Fellows A.D. thirty-three !  
How pleased dear Francis Popham would have been  
If this success of his name-sake he'd seen ;  
For he was skilful in the angler's art,  
And every cunning dodge he knew by heart.  
His troutng on the Kennett was renowned,  
As many brother fishers often found).  
Upon the twentieth I had nine—the most  
Of which, in this excursion, I could boast ;  
But to the end of month the sport was fair,  
A five, two sixes, and a four were there.  
October opened in a sulky pet—  
Still, murky, close, with easterly sea-fret ;

All things, in nature, seeming at a stand,  
As if a coming earthquake were at hand ;  
Or, what it proved to be at last—no wonder !—  
An atmosphere impregnated with thunder.  
The river, too, was scarce in proper ply,  
Swollen with recent rains, and somewhat high.  
Gerald, my second son, had just arrived,  
And by Kinnoull was hospitably hived.  
For casting well he had an innate turn,  
And this he brought to bear upon the Earn.  
For many years he had not thrown a line,  
And then but seldom—yet he did it fine !  
He was indifferent about rods and flies,  
But anxious, if he could, to gain a prize—  
*Fortuna favet fortibus!* 'tis clear—  
(He'd been a soldier, a Welsh Fusilier).  
In “Minister's” grand stream he'd scarce begun,  
When his first rise was from a thirty-one !  
It was a fish of pluck and ample power,  
And took him just three-quarters of an hour,

Before, with Anderson and cleik at hand,  
He brought his captive kipper safe to land.  
That was not all—to give the deil his due,  
He got, before he finished, other two—  
A seventeen and ten ; and I was glad,  
Although that day he fairly beat his dad.  
I got but one—a twenty-two—and lost  
A good one, just below him, to my cost.  
The following day on him I turned the table :  
He had a five-pound grilse, but I was able  
To bag four handsome fish—a twenty-two,  
A twenty, eighteen, sixteen ; but eheu !  
I lost four others, and, with grief be’t spoken,  
By two was treated shamefully !—that’s *broken* !

Four days the haze went on, with wind from east,  
And *we* went on, and never flinched the least.  
Upon the fifth my son again did best,  
For he had five—my three made up the rest ;  
His weights were twenty, two eighteens, two less ;  
Mine were nineteen and two fifteens, I guess.

The sixth and seventh were distressing days !  
No air—some thunder, and that awful haze.  
If fish were taken (and some good ones too)  
To dogged perseverance they were due.  
Hadow fished “Dicks” one evening till ‘twas late,  
And he took four—one thirty-three in weight.  
Proud of this feat he was ; and that with reason—  
His fish was heaviest of all that season !  
But only by one pound : the ninth I’d six,  
And one was thirty-two ; let me affix  
Some notice of his capture. In the deep,  
At foot of “Minister’s,” I saw two leap,  
Each fish of more than ordinary size,  
And both at once—a simultaneous rise.  
Of course, I put my fly across the first,  
Which took it quickly, with a noble burst.  
We coaxed him upwards, past the stream a-head,  
To the back pool, upon its off-side spread ;  
Here, in still water, he soon lost his breath,  
And thirteen minutes saw him done to death !

Then hastening back to angle for his brother,  
Ere half-a-dozen casts, I hooked the other.  
With him we played again our former game,  
And, in eleven minutes, out he came !  
Their weight, united, reached to fifty-nine,  
In minutes twenty-four they both were mine !  
That taken all in all's the sharpest run,  
Which I've on record, of the fish I've won.  
The first was such a model that I passed him  
To Malloch, in the town of Perth, who cast him ;  
And now he decorates our entrance hall,  
To interest all visitors who call.

On the fifteenth, a furious hurricane  
Blew from north-east, with deluges of rain :  
'Twas not so rough when we went out at first,  
But soon we came to realize the worst,  
For when we crossed the river to our landing,  
The tempest hindered us almost from standing :  
Its force was such as staggered us in places,  
And its repeated buffets slapped our faces !

I tried to drive the line, but all in vain !  
With strange gyrations back it came again.  
Casting, in short, was but unfruitful trouble ;  
The fly lit, not on water, but on stubble !  
So we gave in, and, homeward, slowly went,  
Until the fury of this storm was spent.  
But even then it boded us no good,  
For it was followed by an eight-foot flood.  
The dyke\* was then with readiness surmounted,  
And fish ascending could by *shoals* be counted ;  
The Earn was stocked at once, as far as Crieff,  
But we in Dupplin water came to grief,  
Simply depopulated by this run,  
And left for many days with scarcely one !  
But more came slowly up from tidal waters,  
By twos and threes replenishing our quarters ;  
There was no cause for envying our neighbours,  
If some success each day repaid our labours ;

\* A dam across the river, up which salmon cannot spring,  
except in a high water.

In eight of them, ere yet the month was o'er,  
We added three and twenty to our score.

I think, if all the records could be seen,  
My total was one hundred and sixteen,  
While forty-seven—call them odds and ends—  
Were captured by Kinnoull, and other friends.  
The total, therefore, won by them and me,  
Amounted to one hundred sixty-three ;  
And the whole weight of them, in figures round,  
One ton, two hundredweight, and fifty pound.  
Thus, the whole number, on an average, reach  
A good fifteen and quarter pounds for each.

If from that storm we could have been released,  
Our winnings, doubtless, would have much increased.  
Still, Dupplin water this good lot comprised,  
To prove "the ditch" is not to be despised ;  
I'll only add, if folks wont think me silly,  
An ode to Sandy Hamilton, my gillie.

**Sonnet.**

AULD Sandy was a swanky chiel  
As e'er was fed on bannock,  
Or aiten-meal, in Hieland sheil,  
Alang the braes o' Rannoch.

Wi' hair unkempt, and seemin' wild,  
Gigantic, too, in stature,  
Sandie's as mild as ony child,  
An' winsome in his nature.

Anent the saw-mill Sandie lives—  
A sheltered cosie quarter—  
Where he has charge o' Dupplin cruives,  
And watches a' the water.

'Tis twa year syne, when Earn was mine,  
I'd Sandie for my gillie ;  
An' out we went, whate'er was sent,  
Whether 'twas saft or chilly.

He isna larnt i' saumon flees,  
But if I should suggest ane,  
'Tis sure to please—he aye agrees,  
And says it is the best ane !

Or if I add, "Now, Sandie, lad,  
"Advise me what is what, sir,"  
He's safe to say, "Try siller grey,  
"Or, aiblins, a *Jock Scott*, sir."

Though short his list, I must insist  
That Sandie's judgment wise is,  
For through the year, to me it's clear,  
No twa will win mair rises.

Yet Sandie's art has ne'er a part  
In rods, and gear for castin';  
His heuk's a gaff, wi' sax fut staff,  
The saumon to stick fast in !

Lang years o' wear the een impair,  
An' mirk a body's vision,

So Sandie's slow to strike the blow,  
But gie's it wi' precision.

He cleik't five score, and several more,  
Before the close of t' season ;  
An' I'm content wi' that event,  
Y'e'll say, I've muckle reason !

Then here's a quaich, in Uisce-bea,  
To drink the health o' Sandie,  
An' if to Earn I should return,  
I hope he'll bide still handy.

Now let me enter on a task indeed ;  
To tell this year's adventures on the Tweed !  
Upon dear Alfred Denison's decease,  
Into the market came his Birgham lease—  
That's Birgham Dub—and I resolved to send  
An offer to Lord Home, our mutual friend.  
A bargain soon was struck—that for the season  
The Dub was mine, to do whate'er I please on.

Now, what's "a Dub"? Says Jamieson,\* "a gutter,"

A word too mean for fishermen to utter!  
Then he defines it as "a little pool  
"Fed by rain water." But, if I'm in rule,  
This is th' exact description of a "puddle,"  
And leaves the angling querist in a muddle!  
If this explains the Dubs on Tweed, 'tis clear  
That they would have succumbed this very year,  
When rain was absent, as I well remember,  
From March, with scarce a shower, till November!  
Rain *is* essential—that we all can settle—  
To keep our rivers in efficient fettle.  
But let's acknowledge that there *are* such things  
As subterranean reservoirs and springs,  
Which feed the waters, when the clouds refrain  
From sending us their usual stores of rain.  
Should the dear Tweed be dried up from her source,  
Dubs, like the rest, would suffer then, of course.

\* Author of the "Scottish Dictionary."

But *they*, as cisterns, to *the last* would keep,  
With rocky walls, and water very deep.  
These are two features of the Dubs I know,  
Long stretches, with a run exceeding slow.  
Take Birgham Dub, or Sprouston, and you 'll find  
In each, these simple qualities combined ;  
Without a wind their surface is like glass,  
And if you flog them *then*, you are—an ass !  
Try with what flies you will, throughout the day,  
You 'll spoil the casts, but not a fish you 'll slay ;  
Whereas, if a stiff curl be on the water,  
Whether it's high or low, you 'll meet with slaughter.  
Now, taking Birgham, 'tis the usual way  
To fish it up (it gives the fly more play).  
Beginning, then, with what is really last,  
These are the names of each successive cast—  
First are “Cork Stones,” and then “The Nick”—  
    a run  
Where serious mischief often may be done ;

'Tis a deep narrow channel, between blocks  
Of perpendicular and jagged rocks ;  
If hooked *in there*, a salmon's apt to cut  
Th' acquaintance of an angler, and—his gut !  
Your plan's to hold him *lightly*, till he go  
Out of this trap—above it, or below ;  
But if he *will* persist in sulking there,  
Your chance is quite a lottery—so beware !  
The choice of sides is as the wind may fall ;  
That's Hobson's choice—which means, no choice at  
all !

But to reduce mishaps, I think it best  
To fish this kittle water from the west.  
If you can coax your prey from rocks like these,  
You net him in shoal water as you please ;  
The danger is, to fight your fish *too hard*—  
*Light*-handed patience brings its own reward.  
The cast above is called "Hen's Leg ;" but why  
It beats my understanding to descry.

'Tis said an angler had a fish in hand,  
And when he brought his captive safe to land  
A hen's, or chicken's, leg by him was found  
Lying detached upon this very ground ;  
And if I'm asked for my authority,  
Lord Home, the owner, told this tale to me.  
They say 'tis honeycombed throughout the space  
With holes affording fish a resting place.  
In a high water it is simply grand,  
Whether mid-stream, or nearer to the land.  
Next comes Galashan,\* a mysterious word,  
The origin of which I've never heard.  
Contiguous is “Black Hole,” where eddies sweep  
In oily circles : 'tis profoundly deep.  
Then come the “Cundy Mouth” and “Corbie's  
Nest,”  
Where a red scaur lifts up its wooded crest.  
Above that is the “Stream between the Burns,”  
The highest cast in Birgham Dub's returns.

\* Spelt in Stoddart, “Galashan.”

After this local notice, let us scan  
The merits of our friend, the Fisherman.  
To be well suited is no easy matter ;  
Mine was first-rate, though I've no wish to flatter.  
Robson is twenty-five or six years old,  
Tall, well-proportioned, and of sinewy mould ;  
In person he is scrupulously clean  
(More so than many gentry whom I've seen) ;  
In rowing, he's as steady as a rock,  
Without the slightest jerks, to cause a shock—  
That's a great point for casting ; as, with shakes,  
An aged angler's apt to make mistakes—  
To lose his balance (which he can't afford),  
And, by ill luck, to tumble overboard !  
To save such risks there was a nice invention  
(And cures are best effected by prevention)—  
A seat was raised with bars above the thwart,  
Resting one's legs, and giving great support ;  
For even standing still fatigues at length,  
And, more than gentle movement, tries the strength.

Old men decay, if but by slow degrees,  
And the first weakness comes about the knees ;  
All that is saved when thus in state you're chaired !  
And force remains for hours unimpaired.  
Ere we commence my fisherman proceeds  
To pick the fly adapted to our needs—  
“ *Cela va sans dire* ”—it is the man's vocation ;  
And I don't interfere with his dictation.  
He notices the water, and the sky,  
And knows what size and colour to supply.  
In this a fisherman displays his skill ;  
And, if you thwart him, thinks you use him ill.  
Tell him *your* views, perhaps, but let *him* settle ;  
That pleases him, and puts him on his mettle.  
He's a professional at his work, and you  
Merely an amateur in what you do.  
Methinks, 'tis best to act on his decision ;  
Not to agree is something like derision—  
In this respect, a gentleman, if caster,  
Had better let the boatman be his master.”

One other excellence I'll mention yet ;  
Robson's adroitness with the landing net ;  
For certainty and quickness in this last,  
He's seldom equalled, and by none surpassed.

Now, I'll refer to fishing, as it stood  
(Which *in the end* was wonderfully good).  
The season was unusual for its drought,  
Affecting both the salmon and the trout.  
Throughout September there was little done ;  
On Birgham, in a week, but twelve I won.  
Of wind and water there was scarcely any ;  
In fact, the fishing was not worth a penny !  
Fish had not opportunity to swim ;  
And records of the sport were somewhat dim.  
For days all wind was lacking on the Dub,  
One might as well have fished a washing tub !  
In short, 'twas not until October eight  
That we were favoured with a two-foot spate ;  
At Bemersyde that day we'd rain and snow,  
With wind nor'-east, as cold as it could blow !

For three days after there was nothing done,  
But then, in earnest, our sport begun !  
On the thirteenth we'd ten—the next day six,  
Though we lost more that time than we could fix !  
Six took us short—and we were cut by two,  
In that “old Nick,” spite all that we could do !

On the fifteenth, 'twas cold and very still,  
Two symptoms, which, for angling, boded ill.  
To try the Dub was useless. Furthermore,  
We never had an offer until four ;  
Then we had luck upon the Carham stream,  
Such as no angler would presume to dream.  
It had been threshed by some young man for hours,  
And Willie Scott himself had tried his powers :  
Willie, whose angling skill upon the Tweed,  
No living man can possibly exceed !  
Well ! on this stream we tried a tiny “Kelly,”  
And straight a grilse was hooked about the belly !  
Then next we took a beauteous twenty-one,  
As bright as silver, and quite newly run !

Now, what was this? *Not* science, but a *chance* ;  
To call it skill would be a great romance !  
No! there's a time, with these eccentric fish,  
When they *will* rise, exactly as *they* wish ;  
Although with such, *before* they come, and *after*,  
They'd greet you (if they could) with shouts of  
laughter !

But none the less, this *was* a triumph great ;  
And we went home, with our success elate.  
Two days from this we lost three fish, but then  
We had a brilliant day, and landed ten ;  
And on the next our topmost sport was seen,  
For we secured no fewer than eighteen !  
And of this lot combined, the total weight  
Was just two hundred pounds and fifty-eight ;  
This was the champion day of all the season,  
And friends congratulated me with reason.  
Two following days were bad—both still and bright,  
On one we got two fish before 'twas night,

The other blazing, and no good at all ;  
So, in the neighbourhood, I made a call.  
On Saturday again, the twenty-second,  
With a good wind, eight captures more were reckoned.  
Then four—next, two—and following day to these  
Eight more were added, in a spanking breeze.  
The twenty-seventh was a splendid day,  
When other ten were numbered 'mongst our prey ;  
But river waxed some inches in the night,  
And left the water in a dirty plight.  
The twenty-ninth I'd five, and Forrest three  
(I took him down that day to fish with me)—  
Though least in number, he was best in weight,  
For he pulled out a noble twenty-eight.  
One day of this October yet remained  
On which success was equally maintained,  
For on that thirty-first we'd other nine ;  
Then for some days we found the sport decline.  
November first, Lord Home the Dub requested ;  
I gave it—and his friend was not molested ;

It was an awful hurricane from east—  
How men *could* fish I cannot tell the least !  
Lord Alexander Paget braved the gale,  
And had no cause his venture to bewail ;  
He landed seven, in a first-rate form—  
To me a marvel ! in that raging storm !  
Wednesday the second was both fine and quiet ;  
The river full of leaves, and running riot ;  
Its colour red, and dirty as could be,  
Rising in height next day to two-foot three.  
It was well-nigh a week ere it subsided,  
Or angling work could be at all decided.  
But on the fifth we went, and captured four,  
And, by mischances, lost as many more ;  
The fish were travelling by the score indeed—  
A time in which they quite decline to feed.  
Then came the biggest flood we were to see,  
The river rising up to six-foot three !  
Saving, indeed, that one day's intervention,  
Fishing was nigh a fortnight in suspension.

On the thirteenth we had another try ;  
The river clear, but very much too high ;  
For fully seven hours we laboured hard :  
Three fish—the only offers—our reward.  
Next day, without the same amount of trouble,  
Our take was better—just exactly double ;  
But wind, not cold at first, soon showed its powers,  
And we were petrified for near two hours ;  
No fish would move until this cold was gone,  
But sport t’wards evening came much better on.

The morning of fourteenth was, oh ! so rough,  
To check all folk but maniacs, quite enough !  
The wind was north—then veering to the east ;  
It snowed and rained by turns, two hours at least !  
Then we began to see a clearing sky ;  
The water also was in splendid ply.  
Fears changed to hope ; success soon made us keen,  
And captures in the end became thirteen !

This gives to angling such peculiar zest,  
The bad’s at times succeeded by the best !

It froze at night before we went to sleep,  
And snow in morning was three inches deep !  
Down it came thickly, when we made a move,  
Hoping, like yesterday, things might improve.  
Well ! it *did* clear—no wind—a sunny glare—  
Snow in the water—with a frosty air !  
We toiled in vain—for not a fish would move ;  
They wouldn't come for money or for love !  
So off I sent to Kelso, about noon,  
To fetch the carriage—and that none too soon.  
Meanwhile, we paddled to the lowest cast,  
And took a fifteen pounder just at last.  
I dined at Ednam House. It set to freeze ;  
Of frost, they said, the glass showed ten degrees.  
I didn't think it, from my own sensation ;  
Perhaps the dinner quickened circulation !  
Next day was fair, with pleasant wind from west,  
And we secured two fish in "Corbie's Nest ;"  
At "Cundy Mouth" another ; but below  
The water was impregnated with snow.

Four other days showed very little sport,  
Either we stayed at home, or fish took short.  
The nineteenth was of these few days the best,  
When we had four again in “Corbie’s Nest.”  
But now, well-nigh the greatest day we’d reckoned,  
Came to our lot upon the twenty-second.  
That day the wind blew strongly from the east,  
With lots of rain (in the forenoon, at least);  
*East* wind, opposed to current, thus behaves :  
It makes no curl, but quite a *sea of waves!*  
On no day had we seen the Dub so rough,  
And Robson said, “We’d soon have sport enough!”  
A Jonah, with fine judgment, he put on;  
And scarcely in the water had it gone,  
When, at the “Nick,” a heavy salmon took,  
With a tremendous draw, th’ attractive hook.  
Straightway he left the rocks, and rushed across,  
Taking such line as made me fear his loss!  
“Oh! Robson! follow him at once,” I cried;  
“Not so—’twill spoil the cast,” our friend replied;

“ *Bother* the cast ! go after him,” I shouted ;  
“ If not, be sure that we shall soon be routed” !  
(Follow your game’s a maxim truly sound,  
Whether with fish or fowl it may be found.)  
The man was nettled, and in silent anger,  
But *furious* strokes, pulled off, to meet the danger.  
(Those were the only words we ever had,  
For he’s a thoroughly good-tempered lad.)  
I said no more—there was no time for speech ;  
But, reeling up, had got the fish in reach.  
Then he splashed up : said Robson, with a frown,  
“ He’s no’ but fifteen pund, I’d lay a crown.”  
“ Fifteen !” I said ; “ If he’s an ounce he’s *double* !  
“ We’ll get him now without much further trouble.  
“ Be cannie ; draw as near him as you can ;  
“ Depend upon it, that’s our safest plan.”  
The fish kept forging up against the tide,  
We following close, towards our former side ;  
At length, by steady play, we had him netted,  
And *thirty* pounds that salmon was gazetted !

This was encouragement for a beginning ;  
And we went on, *continually* winning !  
No salmon *rose* at us, throughout the day,  
But their assaults were earnest—far from play.  
Jonah was swallowed, not as he of old,  
But with a gulp, securing perfect hold.  
The fish took *under* water, but so fast,  
We got fresh hold, when we'd secured the last !  
In fourteen offers, *all* but *one* we took,  
That solitary *one* shook off the hook !  
Such rapid great success I don't remember  
As on this blustering morning of November !  
And “rapid” means from ten o'clock till one,  
After which hour no fishing could be done.  
The water waxed an inch or so above,  
And not a single salmon then would move.  
But with a baker's dozen, “*quantum suff.*”  
A body's greedy if that aint enough ;  
Of flies contributing to this sport, I'll say,  
*One* Jonah took *eleven* fish that day !

Greenwell the twelfth, and Wilkinson the last  
(For without him a day was seldom passed).  
(Next day we rested, and George Forrest went ;  
I quite forget what sport to him was sent.)  
Thursday we fished again, with strength restored,  
And five good fish were ours for reward ;  
But here a great adventure I must tell,  
Which on this afternoon to us befell,  
Though *mis*-adventure is th' appropriate name,  
Ending in *smoke* at last, instead of flame !  
It was in “Cundy Mouth”—we nothing saw—  
But underneath there came a massive draw.  
There was no rush—’twas steady and sedate,  
Like a live anchor, for its ponderous weight !  
E’en when it ran the distance was but short,  
The anchor dragged, but soon again was taut ;  
In fact, it shrank from running : it was sulky,  
As fish are apt to be when they are bulky ;  
But pull, pull, pull was th’ order of the day,  
Just on the run, wherein he’d made a stay.

(Robson had previously this fish observed,  
But told me not, lest I should be unnerved).  
I'd nought to do but give and take again,  
Keeping, with rod upright, an even strain ;  
And so he fought me with unceasing power,  
Exactly for three-quarters of an hour.

Then, by degrees, the pressure made him yield ;  
And, inch by inch, we drew him from his bield.

He followed sturdily, but without a jerk,  
As if enfeebled by this tiresome work.

At last, we got him fairly on the shoal—  
For him a loss, for us a hopeful goal !  
There for a time he lay, deprived of motion,  
Enabling us to form a mutual notion

From the dimensions of his actual weight,  
(We thought from forty-five to forty-eight)  
He was not long ; but, oh ! such *depth* of girth !  
To win him would be all one's rental worth !

Plainly we saw him, lying half afloat,  
Almost in reach of fisherman and boat !

So near he was, that Robson marked the grip  
Of hook (too slight !) upon his upper lip,  
While he, quite passive, lay upon his side,  
Ready, we hoped, within the net to glide.  
Barely *six inches* was he from its rim,  
When a last feeble effort came from him ;  
But 'twas enough that tender hold to force—  
Up flew the rod—the line came back, of course !  
He slowly vanished, like a sunken stone,  
And we, without our prize, were left alone !  
The disappointment fairly made me scream ;  
'Twas like a nightmare, or a feverish dream !  
Alas ! how true, that “there is many a slip,”  
Quoting old proverb, “'twixt the cup and lip”!

Now, it's a notion that a salmon's weight,  
If it *escapes*, is always made too great.  
It might be so with us : I'll only say  
That, in my urban walks, there's scarce a day  
That I don't pass the slab of Groves's shop,  
Where, to survey his fish, I always stop.

At their respective weights I make a guess,  
And mostly right, within a pound or less.  
Whether 'tis use or instinct, goodness knows,  
The fact's not poetry, but simple prose ;  
If brother anglers question what I say,  
Just ask the manager himself some day.

The twenty-fifth concluded our season,  
Of which we're somewhat proud—and that with  
reason.

The glass was nearly thirty—wind from west,  
And plenty of it ; here's sufficient test.  
We landed eight ; and they as fine a lot  
As any which we previously had got :  
A twenty-four—two twenty-two—a twenty—  
Nineteen—a brace eighteen—sixteen : that's plenty.  
The twenty-sixth was a tremendous gale,  
And angling efforts were of no avail.  
We finished with a blank, as we'd begun,  
But, 'twixt the two, had many a famous run.

To mention all details I've not pretended,  
But weights and numbers are herewith appended.

Thus far I've written about salmon hooked ;  
Now let me mention how it should be cooked.  
When a good fish comes freshly from the sea,  
'Tis firm, and crisp, and flakey as can be—  
'Tis full of curd (albumen, chemists name it),  
Which you must fix, if you would wish to claim it.  
Should you delay the cooking, it will spoil,  
Because th' albumen changes into oil.  
Boiling in simple water is a fault—  
It must be strengthened with a lot of salt ;  
But lot's a term indefinite, so I'll say  
As much as floats an egg—don't stint it, pray ;  
This raises boiling point eighteen degrees,  
Stay till it bubbles fiercely, if you please ;  
Then pop your slices in, and let them wait  
About six minutes—not so much as eight ;  
Place them upon a strainer by the fire—  
No napkin—bare—that they may be the drier .

And serve them with the brine, as they were boiled,  
Then you 'll attain the end for which you 've toiled.  
The chemical effect of salt is hereby seen—  
It will solidify the gelatine ;  
But, failing this, to fluid it is changed,  
And the fine quality of your fish deranged.  
Yet tastes will differ—as I 'll shew you quick,  
By what I witnessed once at Limerick.  
No stream for salmon is more justly famed  
Than Shannon, running through the town I 've named.  
Well ! I was dining in the chief hotel,  
And a young Londoner was there as well.  
A slice of splendid fish was served to each,  
When this sententious Cockney made a speech.  
“ Waiter, how dare you bring such stuff to me ?  
D 'you think I 'm ignorant what fish should be ?”  
(Thinks I, this gentleman is somewhat bold !  
The fish was full of curd as it could hold—  
Crisp, too, and knuckled, as a fish should be,  
Clean run, within six hours from the sea).

“ It can’t with London salmon be compared.”  
(The wretched waiter looked completely scared !)  
“ *That’s soft and tender*, far from being hard,  
“ And rich in flavour, as if cooked with lard.”  
The flunkey cried, “ Yer honour ! I protest,  
“ Ye might be sure, we’d give yer of our best ;  
“ *’Tis stale* yer honor likes to have yer fish,  
“ And asy t’is, bedad, to mate yer wish,  
“ We’ll *kape* it till it’s *tinder*, for yer use,  
“ If ye’ll accept, this toime, of our excuse !”

Then I stept in—“ Pray, sir, forgive me too,  
“ If I explain what waiter says is true.  
“ As for *this* fish, in Town you cannot meet it—  
“ *That’s soft by length of keeping*, ere you eat it.  
“ Delay in transport must its freshness spoil,  
“ And change, infallibly, its curd to oil ;  
“ From use, you like the staler fish the best—  
“ ‘ *De gustibus non disputandum est.*’  
“ Your right to choose cannot be called in question ;  
“ But there’s great risk of hurting your digestion !

“ When salmon’s oily, be assured by me,  
“ ‘Tis very apt with most to disagree !  
“ But as to quality, here’s my advice,  
“ Let it be proved by simple market price.  
“ What you so deprecate is far the first—  
“ But who’ll pay most for what is really worst ?  
“ ‘ *Live salmon*,’ as it’s called, costs trebly more  
“ Than what you buy from ordinary store.”

My fellow guest took well the expostulation,  
And thanked me for my timely explanation ;  
We pledged each other in some hot potheen,  
And parted the best friends we could have been !  
Though, probably, he’d keep his old opinions ;  
For some likes taters best, and some likes hinions !

## A n n u a l.

*Captures of Salmon in the Tweed during the autumn of 1887,*

By Hon. and Rev. ROBT. LIDDELL.

*Date.*

BIRGHAM WATER.

Sept. 19.—Three,  $14\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $9\frac{1}{2}$ , 7 lb.  
,, 20.—Four,  $6\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $6\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $5\frac{1}{2}$ , 5 lb.  
,, 21. } Blank.  
,, 22. }  
,, 23.—Two,  $6\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $5\frac{1}{2}$  lb.  
,, 24.—Three,  $16\frac{1}{2}$ , 10, 8 lb.

BIRGHAM DUB.

,, 26.—One, 8 lb.  
,, 27.—Two, 18, 6 lb.  
,, 29.—One, 6 lb.  
,, 30. } Blank.  
Oct. 1. }

*Date.*

## BIRGHAM DUB.

Oct. 3.—One, 8 lb.  
,, 4.—Did not fish.  
,, 5.—Ditto.  
,, 6.—Blank.  
,, 7.—Did not fish.  
,, 10. } No fishing.  
,, 11. }  
,, 12.—Two, 21, 8 lb.  
,, 13.—Ten, 20, 17, 16, 10, 10, 8, 8, 6½, 6, 4 lb.  
,, 14.—Six, 17, 16½, 16, 6½, 6½, 6 lb.  
,, 15.—Two, 21, 6 lb.  
,, 17.—Two, 17, 8 lb.  
,, 18.—Ten, 24, 20, 19, 14, 10, 10, 8, 6, 6, 4 lb.  
,, 19.—Eighteen, 27, 25, 23, 19, 18, 18, 18, 17, 16, 15,  
          9, 9, 8, 8, 7, 6, 5 lb. (total weight, 258 lb.)  
,, 20.—Two, 20, 6½ lb.  
,, 21.—Did not fish.  
,, 22.—Eight, 19, 18, 15, 11, 9, 9, 8, 5 lb.  
,, 24.—Four, 19, 16, 10, 4 lb.  
,, 25.—Two, 13, 8 lb.  
,, 26.—Eight, 28, 18, 16, 12, 10, 9, 6, 5 lb.  
,, 27.—Ten, 23, 20, 19, 18, 18, 11, 10, 9, 7, 7 lb.  
,, 28.—No fishing.  
,, 29.—Eight, 28, 22, 22, 20, 17, 16, 8, 6 lb.  
,, 31.—Nine, 24, 21, 20, 19, 18, 8, 8, 7, 6 lb.

*Summary of the Numbers and Weights of Fish in Nine Days  
of October.*

<i>Date.</i>	<i>Fish.</i>	<i>Weight.</i>
Oct. 13.—Ten	...	105½ lb.
," 14.—Six	...	68½ ,,
," 18.—Ten	...	121 ,,
," 19.—Eighteen	...	258 ,,
," 22.—Eight	...	94 ,,
," 26.—Eight	...	104 ,,
," 27.—Ten	...	142 ,,
," 29.—Eight	...	139 ,,
," 31.—Nine	...	131 ,,
Total, 9 days.—Eighty-seven		1163 ,,

<i>Date.</i>	<i>BIRGHAM DUB.</i>	<i>Total Weight.</i>
Nov. 1.—Did not fish. (Lord Alexander Paget got 7 fish.)		
,, 2.—No fishing.		
,, 3.— Ditto.		
,, 4.— Ditto.		
,, 5.—Four, 21, 20, 17, 7 lb.	... ...	65 lb.
,, 7.—A flood of 6 ft. 6 in.		
,, 8.—No fishing.		
,, 9.— Ditto.		
,, 10.— Ditto.		
,, 11.—Three, 22, 24, 25 lb.	... ...	71 "
,, 12.—Six, 22, 20, 20, 14, 9, 7 lb.	... ...	92 "
,, 14.—Thirteen, 26, 24, 23, 23, 20, 18, 17, 16, 14, 9, 8, 8, 7 lb. ...	... ...	229 "
,, 15 (Snow).—One, 15 lb. ...	... ...	15 "
,, 16.—Three, 18, 18, 12 lb.	... ...	48 "
,, 17.—One, 19 lb. ...	... ...	19 "
,, 18.—Did not fish.		
,, 19.—Four, 21, 18, 16, 15 lb.	... ...	70 "
,, 21.—Two, 8, 6 lb. ...	... ...	14 "
,, 22.—Thirteen, 30, 25, 21, 21, 19, 18, 18, 17, 8, 8, 7, 7, 6 lb. ...	... ...	205 "
,, 23.—Did not fish.		
,, 24.—Five, 29, 21, 20, 19, 15 lb. ...	... ...	104 "
,, 25.—Eight, 24, 22, 22, 20, 19, 18, 18, 16 lb....	... ...	159 "

*Summary of the Numbers and Weights of Fish in Six Days  
of November.*

Date.	Fish.	Weight.
Six*		
Nov. 12.—Six	...	92 lb.
„ 14.—Thirteen	...	229 „
„ 19.—Four	...	70 „
„ 22.—Thirteen	...	205 „
„ 24.—Five	...	104 „
„ 25.—Eight	...	159 „
Total, 6 days.—Fifty-five	...	859 „

Or average of nine per day and one fish over for 15 days.

Total number of fish in the season (salmon, 124; grilse, 58), 182

*Extra fish taken by others.*

George Wright, jun.	...	...	...	1
Nov. 1.—Lord Alexander Paget	...	...	...	7
„ 23.—Mr. G. Forrest	...	...	...	1
„ 29.—Mr. D. Arkwright	...	...	...	5
„ 30.—Lord Romney	...	...	...	5

Full total ... ... ... 201

Aggregate weight ... ... 1 ton 2 cwt. 76 lb.

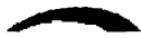
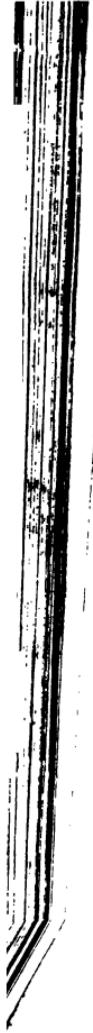
\* Overplus of the average of nine per day in October.



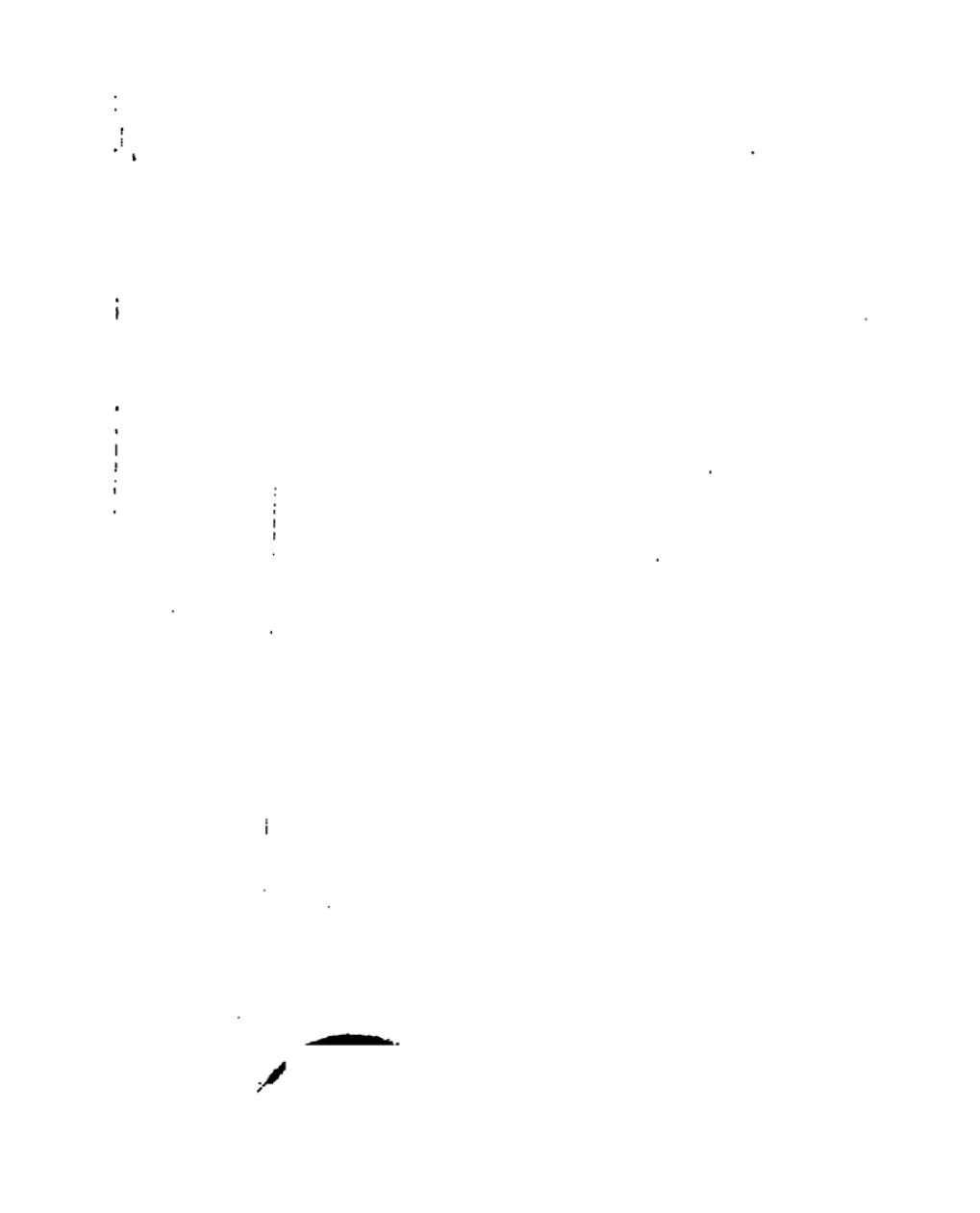














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